

# A SPORTSMAN'S SCRAPBOOK

JOHN C. PHILLIPS

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# REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Their Habits and Adaptations

*By Thomas Barbour*

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THIS book treats in a simple and very interesting way of the natural history of the reptiles and of that other class of animals, once placed among the reptiles, but now known as amphibians, and including frogs, toads, and salamanders, which have larval forms differing from the adult and which make a link between the fishes and the reptiles.

Dr. Barbour's special object has been to set forth clearly the various modifications, both in form and in habits, which living reptiles and amphibians have acquired by evolutionary processes, to meet special environmental conditions.

The many illustrations, most of them from photographs from nature, are of extraordinary interest, and the volume is a fascinating natural-history book.

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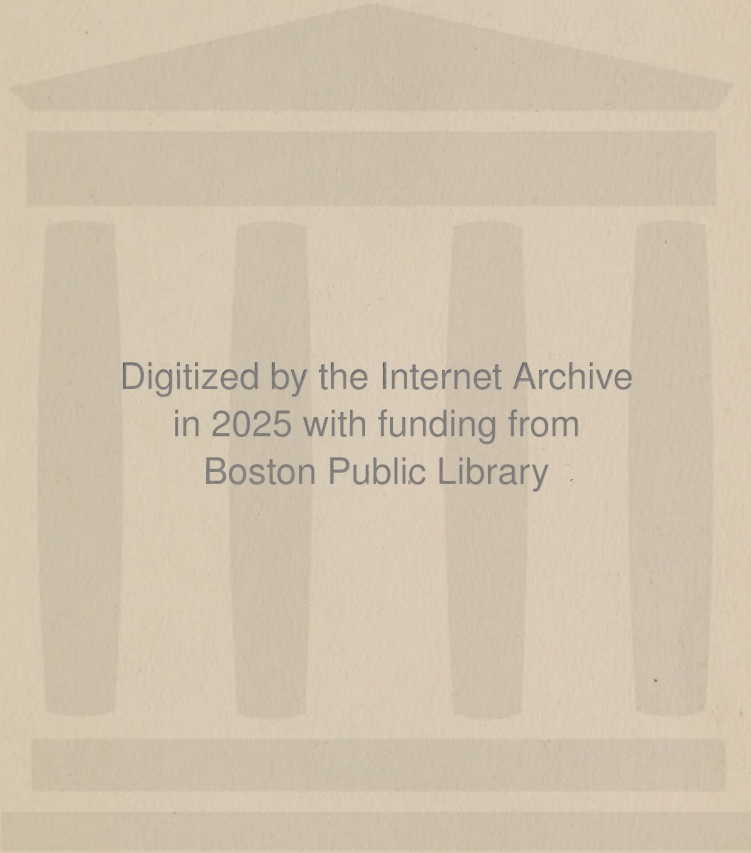




A SPORTSMAN'S SCRAPBOOK







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# A SPORTSMAN'S SCRAPBOOK

BY  
JOHN C. PHILLIPS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
A. L. RIPLEY



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TO  
ONE WHO  
WITH PRAISEWORTHY FORBEARANCE  
HAS LISTENED PATIENTLY TO  
TALES LIKE THESE  
MY WIFE



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# A SPORTSMAN'S SCRAPBOOK

## I

### THE OLD SCOTT HAMMER GUN





# A SPORTSMAN'S SCRAPBOOK

## I

### THE OLD SCOTT HAMMER GUN

THE publication of these totally unrelated sketches of a sporting character was in a sense an act of self-preservation, as when a farmer's boy suffocated by the collapse of a haystack starts to dig his way out. The best drawer in my desk has been bulging for some years with a variety of composition which I had not the heart to burn nor the gall to proliferate. At last, however, summoning what nerve was necessary, I reduced the contents of that drawer to about mean high tide by gathering the flotsam and jetsam between the pages of this book.

Every sportsman begins a book of memories by telling of his first escapades, and in order not to be too much out of tune I am going to do the same, making this chapter as brief and painless as possible.

One stormy morning, when the northeast wind was sweeping across the lake, a boy looked out and saw through the windows a string of black dots floating in the middle of the lower basin of Wenham Lake. What could it be? Perhaps a great tree afloat; at any rate, it needed investigation, and down he went to the wharf and jumped into a boat. Hardly had he gone a hundred yards from shore when, like a great fan, a score of black ducks leaped into the air and filed off on whistling wings through the mist. That incident made a great impression on his boyish mind, for those were the first ducks he had ever seen. But years before, there was discovered

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in the attic a handsome Scott twelve-gauge gun in a case, and it was a secret amusement to creep up to the attic and put that gun together and point it at every object within sight. Not until he was fifteen years old, however, was he allowed to call that gun his own, and one day Uncle William was good enough to take him shooting. The boy's journal relates the incidents of that first day, and he can remember the first shot he ever fired. It was on the edge of the Wenham Swamp near Idlewood Pond. Execution was not very great, though I fear one or two songbirds had to suffer; but next day he went out in the canoe and bagged a spotted sandpiper.

Then followed a long period during which, very sensibly, the boy was allowed to go out only when Robert, the house-man, could go with him. Furthermore, his efforts were relegated to crows, those being the only birds that were considered a proper target for him to shoot at. Nothing safer for these wary fowl could have been devised. For months, at every opportunity, he would chase those blessed crows from one end of the farm to the other with Robert dragging along, a discouraged figure, in the rear; but never once did he get near enough to exchange compliments.

Unluckily for him, about that time he went to boarding-school, just at the magic season when ducks were due, and the only time he had for the gun was Sunday morning. With what impatience he waited for Sunday only those who have had the sporting fever can really know. He would be up at a most unearthly hour and with paddle, rubber boots, and the old Scott, creep down to the wharf and silently launch a little lapstreak Rush-ton canoe. After he had cruised the lake, he often landed at the north end and walked through the woods to

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Cedar Pond, then to Muddy Pond, and finally to the south end of Idlewood Pond.

His first duck; it seems only yesterday to him, so clearly does the whole story stand out in his mind, while events of importance both earlier and later are wrapped in the fog of forgotten things. It was a Sunday morning in September and he and his brother were paddling around the lake when some fishermen told them that a duck had flown by and alighted on the mud at the head of Pond-Lily Cove. Frantically landing, the boy ran at all speed to the house, got his gun and crept carefully through the strip of swamp separating the road from the cove. The lake was very low and he had a long crawl on his stomach to get within range, keeping a point of rocks between him and the doomed fowl. Bang! and he jumped up; bang! again, to make doubly sure, and down into that quaking mess of black muck he ran in his Sunday clothes. Well, he got the bird and took him home, and a well-merited lecture was his reward, for he was a cake of mud from his waist down. Furthermore, he didn't care a bit, for there was that splendid black duck lying on a chair beside him while he changed his clothes. That duck was mounted and he has him yet.

During those first years he had various fearful and wonderful schemes for thwarting the ducks. He purchased several highly painted decoys and made various 'hides,' one in the high bank on the west side of the narrows, one dug in the rocks on the point of Dodge's Cove, and another one on still another point. Then came live decoys, about which he knew absolutely nothing, but quite early in the game he got several ducks and a pair of geese from Old Woodman, who used to shoot on the west side of Chebacco Pond.



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At first he did not dare to fly his ducks for fear of losing them, but used to keep one in a box in the stand tied to the end of a line which was wound on a large reel. At intervals he would hurl the duck into the air; the reel would usually stick, and the duck would land head first upon the beach, a much surprised and somewhat shaken bird.

All those sporadic efforts were of little effect on the duck population, but he learned to love the mystery of those sharp October mornings, when jays and squirrels made the woods lively, blackbirds swarmed south, and strings of ducks, though few and far between, produced on that very account a most prodigious excitement.

One stormy Saturday night in late October the boy came back from school and they told him that a flock of six ducks had been drifting around the pond all day. He planned an early start, and in fact so early was he abroad that he had cruised all over the pond a couple of times before he found them, a bunch of ruddies in Wenham Cove. Paddling carefully up, the mist just lifting from the calm water, he took a lucky aim and stretched out three, and as they jumped he let down one more, and in the end got a fifth. That was the first bunch of webfoots he ever gathered in, and to say that he was proud would hardly express his seraphic state of mind for weeks afterward.

But he did not begin to take any regular toll from the Wenham ducks until he built the 'smally-smally' in or about 1893. A photograph of this remarkable duck float still exists in one of his old scrapbooks. Its sides were constructed of two planks, and the bottom was made of narrow matched boards nailed across. The fore end was decked with canvas and supported a padded crotch in

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which the gun rested. A leather strap went around the stock of the gun to take up the recoil, and the piece thus rigged was fired with one hand. This floating peril stood only a few inches out of water and was driven by a single scull oar. A little blind of brush across the deck concealed the operator.

The boy usually sat in one of his 'hides' until he saw something to scull to, and many were the exciting sets he made to 'coots,' ruddies, or blue-bills. He always went heavily armed in the 'smally-smally'; usually a single-barrel ten-gauge 'Champion' gun did service on the deck, while a 'cripple stopper' was carried beside him. Brass shells were used, and he had a notion that the more powder he put in, the more ducks; so he filled them full. The recoil was frightful, especially when the sling-strap broke and the gun came jumping inboard and nearly knocked him out of the boat. However, nothing serious happened, with the exception that an extra heavy dose of powder finally bulged out the eight-dollar 'Champion' above the breech, so prominently that he couldn't see the front sight.

After that there must have been an old hammer ten-gauge of sorts, and he well remembers buying at Lovell's gun store in Boston a 'sawed-off' gun whose muzzle had been blown away, and that was a deadly weapon on rabbits. It cost him fifteen dollars.

His first wooden decoys were a flock of four, a canvas-back, a red-head, a whistler, and a sheldrake, which, bobbing serenely together, formed a picture of gregarious discrepancy scarcely to be matched in the animal kingdom.

When schoolmates joined him of a Sunday at the farm, they had duck drives which sometimes resulted

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in the untimely end of a buffle-head or whistler. One youngster would 'lay' on the end of some point, or in a little blind built on Butler's Isle (when the water was low enough), while another would round up stray fowl which might be resting in Dodge's Cove or Cranberry Cove.

After they had exhausted these possibilities, they would walk the hill covers between the house and the farm, and shoot rabbits. The cover was just right at that time and one had to shoot mighty quick. The old blueberry pasture next to Dodge's Hill was a great place for rabbits, but long ago it grew up into straggling woods of birch, pitch-pine, and locust. The boy used his 'sawed-off' on these hunts and always shot from the hip.

In boarding-school days they had a sport which, looking back on it, was mighty good fun, though perhaps not of the highest type, ethically speaking. One used to be able to get live white rabbits from Maine for a dollar and a half per pair and the boy kept a large number in a pen at the farm all winter. About a week before a shoot he would turn out a few of these in some swamp, usually near the old fox-hole oaks, and the rabbits would not as a rule stray very far. By the end of a week they would become oriented enough to give the dogs a good run, and many a fine chase they had, and many a racy shot as the hare darted across the farm avenue where the young pines were thickest, or again 'took' across a wide field, giving a pretty view, which a wild hare will seldom allow. It is rather a strange fact that, with all this stocking, northern hares never increased, nor do I think they ever bred there.

They also carried on this same sport up in Wenham Swamp, where in 1896 and 1897 the boy had a little



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camp about eight by eight feet square, with two bunks and a double-wick kerosene stove. They used to go up there on a Friday or Saturday through the winter, driving over from the farm and taking their food with them. On these trips they always took an old hound named Taxy, and later on he was helped out by a very ugly dog called Frank.



These early gun memories would not be complete without a mention of some of the engines of destruction which these boys made or were given in their early teens. There was a very elaborate bow-gun, with trigger release and a fine groove to hold the arrow; also sling-guns of many kinds and sizes. Then, of course, they had all kinds of slings, bows and arrows, and wooden swords, shields, and spears. The bows and arrows they chiefly used for playing Indian, and at the same time to hunt with great stealth the half-grown rabbits which fairly swarmed at the farm in early summer. To quote from the boy's journal of June 28, 1889: 'I had a bow and

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arrows, and brother had a net, sling-stones, and a barbed arrow. Charley had a bunch of sling-stones and a barbed arrow. We didn't scare up a rabbit, and I say that, when you are well armed and ready for them and have time to catch them, you never see a one, but when you are taking a walk you always without exception see them.' Many a time since has this early philosophy been found to hold good on more spectacular game than bunny rabbit.



II  
CAMPS





## II

### CAMPS

IT is natural that young people should like to have camps, and it seems that at a certain tender age the habit is common to both sexes. Take the boy first. He locates some kind of a lean-to of branches, a tunnel in a haycock, or the corner of a woodshed; any place that he thinks will never be discovered, or, if discovered, will prove impregnable to assault. Then he ties feathers in his hair, gets a bow and arrow or a cap pistol, and makes himself a general nuisance. He gathers about him companions and trains them to be little nuisances too. Now with the budding girl the incentive seems to differ. She does not originate the idea, but imitates her brother, and she calls the camp a 'secret place' or a 'cozy corner' or something like that. While the boy plans to provide a kind of headquarters from which to organize predatory expeditions, smoke the forbidden pipe, or indulge in other forms of outlawry, the feminine reaction is more domestic. She likes a place that she thinks nobody can find, especially the boys, and she likes to practice a kind of unconscious 'come-catch-me-if-you-can' game which will doubtless develop into something more practical in a few years.

But camps are not for the young alone, for I know old men of sixty-five or seventy years still pregnant with the longing to get into a shack, mess about with pots and pans, and stir up some abominable dish. They like to give way to independence, a little toughness, more or less dirt, and a lot more healthful instincts which

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perhaps ought not to be entirely suppressed even at their time of life. Here am I, for instance, at fifty planning another camp for next autumn, and, while drawing out the first sketches, glancing a little sadly back over the years for my own amusement and trying to bring to light the bright memories of other camps, some long ago burned, some torn down, a few still standing, ghosts of camps that haunt the woods, the beaches, and the pond-sides from Wenham to the elbow of Cape Cod.

Reader, if you do not feel the fascination of opening up the shutters of a clammy and long-shut house, of starting the fire and arranging with military precision your various traps, of sweeping out the musty cobwebs or perchance a defunct screech owl, or a lively deer mouse, then stop where you are. You, poor soul, can never imagine the lively satisfaction of seeing a gloomy shed rapidly assuming the warmth and comfort of a miniature home. You cannot visualize the city pilgrim tearing off his city shirt and pulling on a warm and comfortable and possibly a 'mousey'-scented one, hunting under the bunks for a pair of mildewed moccasins or patched-up rubber boots, and setting the alarm clock for some unearthly hour. And so I am going to start by telling of my first camp, leaving out of account the ephemeral haycock tents, lean-tos of discarded boards, and sundry bowery tunnels of the years before ten.

Somewhere in that range of little mountains south of Boston called the Blue Hills there lies high up toward the easterly end a wild, rock-walled glen, a veritable Rip Van Winkle solitude when we first discovered it. It overlooked to the south the big stretch of country around Ponkapoag and Braintree Ponds and away north and east you could glimpse the smoky city of







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Boston and the islands in the harbor. Here, about five miles from school, my friend and companion in crime, J. B., and I erected a kind of wigwam of poles, wound roundabout with a roll of tar paper. On bicycles and the last two miles on foot, we would repair to this harbor of refuge on fine spring days and forget for an hour the restraints of boarding-school. No wonder poor Mr. A., our mentor, racked his brains to figure out what on earth we were up to; but so far as I know we were never followed nor was our camp discovered by humans in that lonesome spot. Of furniture we had not a trace, but in a hole in one corner we buried a four-ounce poison-blue medicine bottle which contained precious 'cherry bounce' and in another corner a pipe and tobacco belonging to J. B. The 'cherry bounce' was purveyed to me each week-end by a ruddy-faced old seamstress named Agnes who made it, and, I am inclined to suspect, used it upon herself with considerable freedom, if one could judge from the general atmosphere of well-being which surrounded her rotund person. Poor old Agnes, I don't remember what became of her, but I expect she left the family roof-tree with a not too perfect reputation for sobriety and righteousness; may her soul rest in peace!

One day we climbed old Chickataubut Hill and entered the narrow glen, but a black and forbidding waste met our eyes, for the place had been swept by fire and nought remained of the camp. The blistered skeleton of J.'s tobacco box alone pointed out the hallowed spot, and we never built again. Poor old Mr. A., I expect he at last breathed a sigh of relief. He had some notion of our whereabouts when we were robbing birds' nests in neighboring orchards, or skinning feathered corpses

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down in the cellar, but those all-afternoon disappearances must have worried him a good deal.

The other day I hunted out the site of that old camp. I found it at last, not much changed, although all the surrounding country has been a park area for twenty-five or thirty years.



There is a great swamp in the town of Wenham and Hamilton, a kind of *terra incognita* that fascinated boys because, for a great part of the year, its overgrown and unstable wood roads were nearly impassable. John Josselyn thus described the place in 1671. He says, 'The next town that presents itself to view is Ipswich, situated by a fair river, whose first rise is from a lake or pond twenty miles up, betaking its course through a hideous swamp for many miles, a harbor for bears.'

My father owned a woodlot in that swamp, part of it a beautiful, high hemlock-covered knoll, and some men had put up a little rough board camp, eight by eight feet, to eat their lunches in when they were working there in winter. About my last year in school I seized upon this

## CAMPS

place, cleaned it out, and sheathed it with tar paper. Then I nailed in a couple of bunks, made some straw mattresses, bought a double-wick kerosene stove, the kind that used to smell to heaven, and when winter came I was ready for business. I shall always look back on that spot as one of the pleasantest situations for a winter playground in Massachusetts. It faced south with towering hemlocks behind it and a little opening in the woods in front to let in the winter sun. But a more outrageously uncomfortable shelter was never erected by the sons of man. A trapper in the North Woods would have been thoroughly ashamed to acknowledge it. The floor space outside the bunks was about three by four feet, and in that we had the stove, a couple of chairs, and some sort of table, besides ourselves. The hay mattresses got musty and mingled their odors with the rich smoke from the oil stove. Every camp has its own peculiar atmosphere, but that Wenham Swamp Camp was positively unique, and I think I can by a little concentration conjure it up even now with reasonable accuracy. The Japanese have a game of smells in which they are required to guess the particular perfume that is offered to them. It would be interesting if we could be wafted blindfold to some of the old camps we have known to see whether we might guess their location by olfactory contact.

We used to arrive at the swamp camp Saturday noons, accompanied by a fine old hound named Taxy, who first saw the light of day at Northfield, Massachusetts. We drove up from the farm, passed the 'jag man's' house, and then plunged into the woods. The team would come for us next afternoon. One memory of the swamp camp is of sundry bottles of 'Club' cocktails, a hair-oily mix-

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ture which used to be handed across the counter for a dollar and a quarter at any of the old-time liquor stores. Not long it was before our friend and nearest neighbor, the 'jag man,' found out about the bottled cocktails, and we used to marvel to see him pour off a whole tumbler at one gulp, without even catching his breath. But I am forgetting the great runs we had through the frozen swamp following the hound Taxy in pursuit of white rabbits, and our visits to Idlewood Pond in the spring. On cold winter days we used sometimes to entertain a party of fox hunters who had followed the red fox all day and were ready for a rest and a bite to eat. And on clear moonlight nights we sat on our wooden stools and listened to the hooting of the Great Horned Owl, and could imagine we were trappers a thousand miles north of the St. Lawrence. Good old Tom, my companion of swamp camp days, has crossed his last horse and listens no more for the cry of the eager pack; the 'jag man' was gathered to heavenly pastures where hard cider is problematical; and the shanty itself burned to the ground a long time since. But those hemlocks remain in all their old-time glory to show the Sunday idler what the swamp once looked like, when every island was clustered with tall dark evergreens and the maples reddened at their tips in the March sunshine.

Another and very different camp next claims our attention. It was called 'Maggot Isle,' or 'The Wormy Isle,' and it stood in its tar-papered glory on a little quarter-acre island in the Agawan River, town of Wareham. It was built entirely by T. P. and J. C., for the former was something of a carpenter and the latter was an optimist who helped to furnish it with pillows and



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blankets 'borrowed' from various hotels and boarding-houses. One trip the optimist walked across from Plymouth, sixteen miles, with a back-load of these useful articles. But I must tell how we discovered the place. It was this way. Along in June, when classmates were very properly attending the exercises at Cambridge, we shipped a canoe to Wareham because there was a river there, and we soon followed in its wake. We bought a few tins of food and a fry-pan and paddled up through the salt marshes toward the dam at East Wareham, where we made our first acquaintance with Charlie Billings of the 'Squirrel's Nest.' Charlie was a real character, much given to practical jokes. A path led off to 'the spring,' and when you got there you found a wagon spring, while the interior of the old inn was decorated with all sorts of mottoes, outline sketches of famous fish caught by famous men, and any number of puns and jokes. Charlie was killed by a motor car not long ago and the inn has now burned. But no matter, many people will carry to their graves pleasant memories of the old spot, so crammed with reminders of old-fashioned comfort and forgotten customs. Daniel

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Webster himself put up there when he fished for black bass with old man Tisdale in Flax Pond.

We paddled on up the river that first trip, explored the Eagle Hill stream far into the 'barren grounds,' and camped under the canoe at Glen Charlie Pond. I particularly remember that first night, as, youthfully improvident, we had no defense against the swarms of mosquitoes that made noise enough to keep us awake even had they been of some stingless variety. The next day, J. C. burned most important areas out of his trousers, besides reducing his shoes to ashes, so that when we returned to Wareham he had to lean up against a wall every time some one passed along the street, while I contrived to screen him when no wall was handy. The proprietor of the hotel gave us some pointed looks before he decided to lodge the grimy pilgrims.

On the next trip, a week or two later, we took along friend T. P., camping at the Glen Charlie rapids, and I vividly remember that, when running a race on the clean sandy shores of one of the ponds, I nearly cut off my great toe on a bit of hidden glass and had to be assisted back to the river. But J. C. was even then equal to the emergency, and I was well attended. I think it was on that expedition too that I ate three rotten eggs on a bet, a feat which should be attempted only by buoyant youth. At this time I remember we fixed definitely on the little island at the head of the Wareham back-water, and solemnly hid there what tools and equipment we had with us, until such time as the camp should be started.

That same summer, while I was away in Greenland, the camp developed according to schedule. It was

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nearly square and had two bunks at either end, a gasoline stove in the middle of the north wall, and four or five square sliding windows for illumination. There was no chimney or fireplace, and we used it at all seasons; our circulation must have been rather better than now. We kept our canoes at Charlie's boathouse and paddled up the three or four miles to the island camp at any hour of the day or night. In winter we sometimes used the canoe as a sledge and pulled it over the frozen lake.

That was a perfect little wilderness. In winter we set pickerel traps around the island or in 'lost duck' cove or took them to some of the other ponds. In spring we discovered trout fishing in Eagle Hill which was often remarkably good. We had that whole wild region at our very doors, and could wander among the ponds and over the open burnt lands with gun or rifle for days without seeing a human being. We kept old Taxy there too, and ran foxes around the deserted sandbanks of Glen Charlie Pond. There was something to do at any time of year. Usually two would make up the party, but sometimes more, for four of us were members of the 'Maggot Isle' Club.

One evening I remember J. C. and I were at the camp, knowing T. P. was coming alone on a certain late train. We contrived to make it appear that we had left the island, but instead we repaired to the roof, loaded with shotguns. After a time in the darkness we heard the knocking of a paddle on the side of an approaching boat and soon T. P. landed, went inside, and began to cook supper, muttering to himself upon our strange absence. When the unsuspecting victim had settled down nicely to his meal, we touched off four shotgun barrels right

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over his head, which brought him up 'all standing,' uttering threats to get even with us some other day.

The island camp lasted a good many years and was still standing when I built on Eagle Hill, five miles north, a few years later. The surrounding shores are still attractive, but the cedar swamps are entirely gone and in their places are man-made cranberry bogs and little houses that contain the pumps to flood them. Glen Charlie Dam was restored in 1909, and the best part of the stream destroyed; worse still the pickerel grew to an amazing size and in a couple of years the trout had almost vanished.



Come east now for fifty or sixty miles and you will reach the elbow of Cape Cod, at Chatham: Chatham, whose broad outer bay echoed to the soft cackle of thousands of brant in March and April; where you might shoot with mighty Captain Gould, or consort with the old guides at the brant shanties, Alonzo Nye, George and Washie Bourse, and others I don't remember. You could stay with Natty Gould at the Shooters' Isle Black



## CAMPS

Duck Club, where they had everything to shoot and eat, to say nothing of 'battered rums and poker.'

I kept my dory at the head of the mill pond, right below John Farmer's little hotel. It was a goodish voyage out to the camp, particularly when the inner harbor was partly frozen and we had to pull the boat and all our traps over the shore ice to get to open water. You rowed, or sailed if you could, into Stage Harbor, around Stage Isle. Then you opened up on the south horizon a long low beach which cut off your view of the outer bay, and near the end of this beach you could just make out a small excrescence, my Chatham Shanty. The beach was Harding's Beach, and in those days a prominent landmark was the great seaweed storehouse erected by Samuel Cabot, already in my college days falling into decay. Chatham Shanty was not much more than a large-sized box pegged down on a bare sand spit and the high tide fairly washed our doorstep. It was a little more roomy, however, than my other camps, and besides its four comfortable bunks it had some kind of an open-front iron stove and a long stovepipe outside which towered high over the roof. A ladder nailed on the easterly wall gave access to the roof, where one had a splendid view of Chatham Bay on the south, the harbor on the north, and the great sandy stretch of Monomoy Point shutting off the open sea.

It was a great place, was that camp, to 'suffer' out a storm, for no matter where the wind was we got it all. I can remember lying in my bunk during the frightful blizzard of November, 1898, when the steamer Portland went down with all hands, watching the whole east wall buckle so that the heavy cross-ties were bent like bows. In fact, H. S. and I were out that very night under the

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bluffs on Stage Island 'laying' for ducks at what we used to call the 'splashes.' We made two trips that evening, going back a second time across the harbor because we heard the storm coming on and thought that ducks might be driven into the ponds. We had to row straight into the northeaster, which was coming up fast with spits of sleet and snow, but we managed to get across and under the lee of the high bluffs, where we did not realize the fierceness of the unloosed elements. We stayed an hour or so, and then about nine o'clock we retreated to the dory and got in. Harding's Beach was nearly dead to leeward and not much over a mile, but to this day that ride stands out as the most exciting voyage I ever took. The moment we shoved off we were helpless in the mad fury of a shrieking blizzard which tore the black water into a great rushing blanket of foam. I sat in the stern with an oar, and almost before we realized it we cast up on Harding's Beach, and right glad to be there too.

That winter of 1898-99 was an Arctic one, and Chatham Bay froze clear over in mid-February, catching Henry H. and myself with plenty of gasoline and a good pile of wood while the glass hovered around the zero mark for days. The pack drove in and piled up on the brant bars in great jagged icy walls with towering peaks and sawtooth edges so that you could imagine yourself in Baffin Bay with a seal or a polar bear around the corner. Right in front of the camp a small hole stayed open, and we had good sport there with whistlers, old squaws, and eiders, pulling our nightshirts over our many sweaters, and piling up ice cakes for a blind. Or perhaps we would sprint out from the camp when the ducks were under water and take them when they rose

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to the surface. The black ducks were nearly starved out in that weather, and came in numbers to a little creek on the inside of the beach, scarcely a mile from the shack. One night I lay there with a native named Roscoe Gould who had walked out from the mainland. It was the wickedest night I ever sat out for ducks; a gale to the northwest and the glass among the minuses, and of course we had little or no shelter, only a few ice cakes in front and our backs to the gale. We killed a duck or two. Then it grew pitch black, a moonless night, and, although we could hear ducks lighting all about us, not a thing could we see to shoot at. We both shook like a pair of ague victims, but neither liked to make the first suggestion to quit, the city boy trying to pretend he was as tough as the Cape variety. So we sat on and on and Heaven knows who made the first move, but I can still feel the shivers run up and down my spine when I think of that occasion. My friend H. had a good fire going when I stumbled back that night (he was older and wiser than I and stayed at home), but nothing seemed to raise my temperature for hours and hours. I think we got just two ducks to pay for that night's work.

After that February freeze came a blizzard which Cape Cod remembered for years. Soon after the snow began to fall we started for Chatham, dragging our goods on an improvised sled. But imagine our uneasiness when the northeast wind began to crack the ice. I walked ahead sounding with an axe, for the drifting snow covered all the surface and we could make out nothing. We got nearly across Stage Harbor when H. dropped in through an air hole and I had trouble enough to get him out. I remember we felt pretty well relieved when our feet touched solid shore. For hours and hours we toiled

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through the drifts, dragging our suitcases and a box of live ducks after us until we made the town. That night we slept comfortably in Mrs. Farmer's parlor, moving a couple of beds close beside the stove. When we awoke the whole town was buried. It took the train two long days and a night to run to Boston, almost a record, I should think.

But the pleasantest memories of the camp are of those still winter mornings when the whole bay was leaden calm under a gray sky and the old squaws sounded their mellow music from far across the broad waters. When the tide served we sat in a little sand and seaweed 'blind' on the tip of the point, close to camp, anchored a few wooden decoys out in front and waited for the passing chance — stray loons, scoters, eiders, or old squaws. Anything that flew was deserving of an honored place on the east wall of the shanty and a loon was as good as a goose for that purpose. Here too we tried many experiments in cooking seafowl and worked out some powerful if not particularly digestible meals. I must also not forget how we invented a quickly prepared dish called a 'gorm,' the basis of which was a shredded wheat biscuit, softened with boiling water and covered with condensed milk and a layer of sugar!

Then we had the best of scallops, all for the taking on the flats at low tide, and on pleasant spring days we sailed the bay in my trim dory or tried to drift onto brant geese in a home-made sneak boat. Winter afternoons our regular routine was a trip across to the 'splashes,' where we would put out a couple of live decoy ducks and 'lay' till dark with a fair chance of getting a shot at an old red-leg black duck. Reader, if ever you think that your hands are seasoned to the winter blasts







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and too tough to require an oysterman's mitten, come help us this winter evening set up fifteen or twenty seaweed bunch decoys with your bare hands and the glass at ten or fifteen degrees above zero. There is something about wet eel grass that makes you simply hop around and cry out with exquisite agony after you have handled it for about a minute.

We had visitors rather often at Chatham Shanty, some when we were not there to receive them, but we never missed anything of consequence. On cold days a scalloper or some shooter from the main shore would wander in, pull a chair up to the fire, and warm up. Sometimes he would talk, but more often he wouldn't, just make himself at home as if he'd been invited and stroll out when he got ready, with seldom a word of thanks. In those days camps were pretty generally respected; the Cape still preserved the 'homely' virtues of a race of seafarers and longshoremen and the summer colonies had only begun to change the vocations and aspirations of the Eldredges, the Goulds, and the Crowells, sturdy names that have made good in the farthest corners of America.

One thing at least has slowed up in the past thirty rustling years and that is oil-stove cookery. We used gasoline stoves when they first came in and many anxious moments we passed watching one of those temperamental mechanisms. When you got up on a cold morning, you first pushed a lever and flooded the little pans under the burners, then you applied a match. If you had just the right amount of 'juice' the resulting flames warmed the burners and presently you saw the bright blue hissing jets that would boil the pot in no time. But if, as sometimes happened, you got interested in some-

thing else and miscalculated the time between the pushing of the lever and the application of the match, a horrid great column of roaring flame would go towering up five or six feet. And there was not a thing you could do but stand by and wonder whether the thing would exhaust itself before the ceiling got hot enough to catch, or before the dish towels, now wildly waving in the draft, would go up in smoke.

A great while ago these stoves were taken off the market, probably by mutual agreement between the life insurance companies and the Rockefellers. And now we have to fiddle along with the prosaic blue-flame kerosenes that are so infernally sluggish that you have to get up half an hour earlier of a morning, and so ridiculously safe that a baby can play with them.



The scene now changes, and I must introduce you to Wenham Camp built into a steep moraine on the west shore of Wenham Lake in the summer of 1900. Right



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below the camp there jutted out the point which we gunned for many years and we could watch the decoys from the east windows. Elmer Crowell of Cape fame officiated at this camp for years and introduced us into all the niceties of live decoy lore. He showed us how to build a proper duck coop, how to rig a 'runner' far out into the pond that always worked, and how to train a duck to catch corn in its bill as cleverly as a dog catches a biscuit. And he could shoot, too, could Elmer. I can see him now dodging about the stand and pitching ducks into the air with amazing dexterity, never for a moment taking his bulging eyes off the circling flock of wild ones.' Then when the shy birds finally 'took the water,' the first thing Elmer did was to tear off his coat in a sort of crouching position, but eyes to the front always. The rest of us would often get flurried and want to shoot too soon, but not Elmer. He had a calming influence and would never 'give the word' until just the right moment. And Elmer used to decorate Wenham Camp with all sorts of mythical-looking birds, whittled out and suspended from the ceiling so that they revolved solemnly around if you blew a puff of smoke their way, and we kept a sketch-book where he contributed drawings depicting important events. It was here, too, that Elmer made those most surprisingly technical suggestions on paper at the time when Drs. C. and W. were reading manuscript of their book on genito-urinary surgery. These I fear are forever lost to the followers of Æsculapius.

Wenham Camp was well constructed. It still does duty near our present duck stand about a mile from where it was first set up. We dragged it away over the ice one winter. On its original site you entered a kitchen

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and opened up the main room on the right, where Elmer or Eli slept. There were two bunks at the far end, a table between the two east windows and a Franklin stove at the north end, with a big drain-pipe chimney. Later I added a sleeping-room north of the kitchen which had to be cut into the ridge; from its contact with the damp ground it grew to be called the 'ice-chest' and always preserved a morgue-like chill that fairly penetrated the vitals of the stoutest campers. Those were the first days of the phonograph, and we had a rather complete repertory of all the cheap songs of the day, none of which would be recognized by the budding generation.

Wenham Camp was reached in various ways. At first by boat from North Beverly Station *via* the south end of Wenham Lake, and also direct by car. We turned up there at almost any hour of the day or night and sometimes just in time to walk into the 'blind' and get the first shot of a morning. A telephone made it easy to keep track of the wind, weather, and sporting prospects, and in the first years that the stand was operated we entertained an imposing array of duck hunters, swapped many a yarn of Currituck or Cape Cod, matched a great shot at Pleasant Lake with a ram hunt in the Rockies, or made abortive attempts to memorize our medical books. In winter, too, after the pond was frozen, two of us would often put in a day or two there. Sometimes it was necessary to sweep out the strangers that strayed down the chimney, such as screech owls, and once even a wood duck.

In the fall it was a real occasion when Elmer or Eli arrived, the camp opened up, the duck blocks anchored off in front and the stand 'brushed' up. A week or more

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was usually consumed in getting things ship-shape, and these were happy times, bursting with the promise of snappy October mornings soon to come. Sportsmen of the purist type, who never were brought up among live decoys and gunning stands, will fail to understand the fascination of preparing for an autumn campaign, or to feel the thrill of creeping into the 'stand' on the first promising morning and scanning the dim black water that stretches away to seeming unheard-of distances, with all familiar objects looming unfamiliar in the weird half-light, and maybe the sharp quack of a wild one from somewhere out there in the undiscovered gloom.

A few days ago I had a letter from Elmer which shows that he too carries about with him a lingering weakness for Wenham. He says, 'As I read it (the Wenham Camp Shooting Log) the old days come back when there was plenty of grub in the larder and the little wicker jug under the bed. Them were the days all right! I wish I could live them over once more, but they have gone forever.' And he adds that he and his son are still 'stubbing' around in the old shop, turning out vast numbers of decoy ducks as usual. And that reminds me that Elmer had a vocabulary all his own and needed no Websterian help to lend color to his conversation. He had an imaginary month called 'Auguary' which was supposed to include all the wildest and duckiest weather. So when Elmer would poke his head outside before blowing out the lamp and remark that it 'sure did look like Auguary,' we turned over and went to sleep with the promise of dirty weather ahead. I should like to go on and try to remember some of Elmer's pet words and stories, but space is all too scarce.

So we must leave Wenham Camp, with its dusty one-

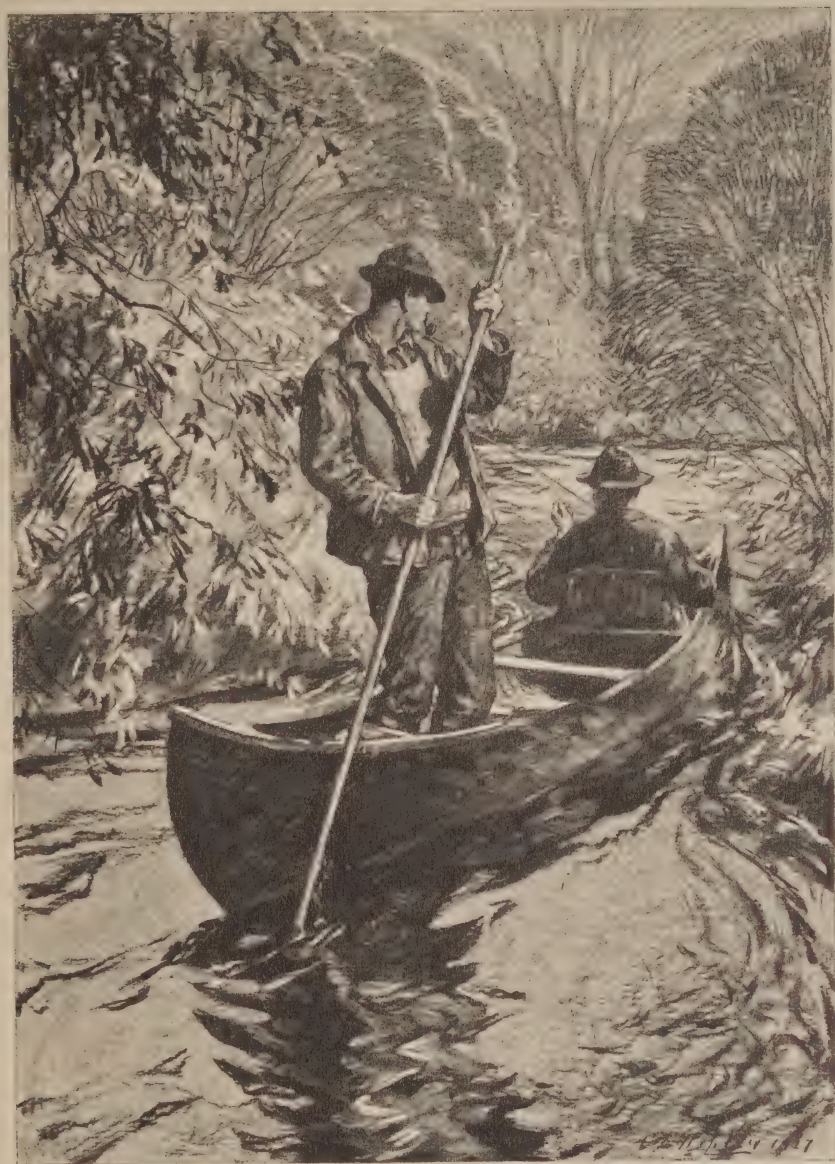
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eyed snowy owl staring down from a corner, its greasy great blue heron flying along the ceiling, and its wall designs depicting the spoils of mighty days tacked up tastefully here and there. It was a good camp, all the better for being easily got at in less than an hour from the city.



And now for Eagle Hill Camp. It was pitched in one of the most romantic bits of wilderness in eastern Massachusetts, a real wilderness of its kind, not far from old Maggot Island. A high rolling plateau, sprinkled full of lovely little sandy-shored gems of ponds, occupies a considerable extent of territory on the west side of Eagle Hill Brook along the Plymouth-Wareham line. From the camp door you looked down seventy or eighty feet into the stream just where it made a turn at the great black pool called 'Seven-Trout Hole' and then foamed away south in a noisy rapid. You looked upstream along the more open 'sandy stretch' and you saw standing out conspicuously the 'Eagle' pines, where on fine spring







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mornings three or four great white-headed birds sat sentinel-like waiting for the alewives to swim up over the shallows close under their favorite perches.

Several of us had fished this lovely stream for years from the first Wareham camp and I had become so fascinated with the lonely valley that I determined to build right in the best part of it. So in 1900, under the direction of John Hersey, who was made stream guardian and general custodian, I built a large and roomy though cheaply constructed building, of four rooms, with later a shed for a horse. Eagle Hill was pleasant at all times of the year. I have seen the most marvelous frost effects in January when the whole deep valley as you looked up it was as if clothed in a fairy snow blanket with the black water flowing amongst the rime-coated branches, while up on the plateau there was no sign of this effect. The stream never froze, there were too many springs along its edges, and we often saw snipe and kingfishers there in mid-winter, while Boston might be groaning under a layer of almost permanent glaciation. In spring the cold south winds off the bay held back the vegetation and, more important still, the mosquitoes, so that we seldom had to prepare against their attacks until late June.

Hersey lived there so long that he became a kind of wild man, and gradually his imagination created fictitious characters who were always supposed to be lying in wait for him at some lonely place in the road up from Onset. He would show you a stick that was propelled at him by some unseen hand or a bullet that had been shot through the camp at night. His special enemy, a real one this time, was old One-Eye, who like himself had lived so long in the Cape barrens that he fancied he owned pretty nearly everything from Halfway Pond to

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Glen Charlie, especially when he was drunk. The feud between Hersey and One-Eye lasted for years; they kept dogging each other's tracks and spying on each other in secret, month after month, and on each visit we would get a minute account of the activities of this curious pair, which amused us no end. One-Eye took a special delight (he almost never missed a chance) of finding out just when we were about to fish the brook. Then he held all the water he could in his reservoir or on his bogs until the stream was too low to fish. Next he would pull his flash-boards and let down a roaring, muddy flood. This would catch us midway of our fishing and insure a thoroughly bad day, incidentally injuring the stream in many ways, even permanently.

Hersey was a great hand at all sorts of Nick Carter woodcraft. He would always be setting more or less invisible threads across the brook or across his wood trails to find out who was abroad, and he often brought to camp sundry curious rocks and imaginary Indian relics about which he would weave the most improbable and elaborate tales.

One day J. B. and I arrived by road from Plymouth and found John Hersey absent. We conceived a wonderful plan to surprise him. We got in through a window and, by dragging mattresses and blankets and furniture outside, we soon faked up a scene of wildest confusion and pretended robbery. Then we took up an observation post and watched the road south where it wound up from Glen Charlie bottom over the treeless 'barrens.' At last came the victim driving slowly, sitting very bolt upright smoking his customary long black cigar and glancing warily from side to side on the lookout for any adventure which might come his way. We, the jokers,



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ran down the bank below the camp and hid behind a large fallen oak, where we had a perfect view of the stage as we had prepared it. We could see H. drive up onto the skyline, see his eyes glisten with excitement, then watch him pull his gun (he always went armed), jump from the buggy and start running round and round the camp, getting more and more excited at each revolution. But soon the joke was on us; we didn't dare lift our voices, nor could we retreat without catching his eye and at the same time presenting a fair target to the now thoroughly excited guardian, so we had to hide cramped up where we were in mortal dread for a half-hour until we judged H. had calmed down and put his gun back in his pocket. Finally we raised a modest shout and crawled warily up the bank. I don't think old Hersey ever quite forgave us that afternoon's work.

But were I to relate all the pleasures, all the thrills, and all the seasonal sports of that little near-home wilderness, I should soon exhaust the confines of this paper. At all seasons we put in busy days, a different enterprise each day. Tramps over the windy barrens, walking from pond to pond, were always interesting. Or we would hitch the horse to the boat wagon and go to any one of a dozen ponds to fish for bass or pickerel or to seine live bait in Little Five-Mile. Sometimes we would 'carry' over to White Isle Pond, where by short portages we could visit several other fine lakes, fishing on the way. Or for good exercise one could paddle down to East Wareham some eight miles or more and pole back to camp. Upstream we could push a canoe way beyond the stave mill and then drift back, admiring the bird life, particularly the migrant warblers and fishing the most likely spots here and there. I still have the records of

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nearly every day's fishing on this stream from 1897 to 1925. We had a rifle range too, a clear two hundred yards in a sheltered pocket of land right near the camp.

One pastime we had, Hersey and I, that was always new, and that was studying the pools in the stream, watching their changes and creating new ones. We would start off from camp with a couple of axes and wade down the brook dropping trees or branches into the bends that seemed to be adapted for a pool and pegging them into place. Or we would shunt the water off a shallow bar and direct it under the opposite bank and so narrow and deepen the place. No matter what we did the stream would always surprise us and eventually go pretty much as it pleased. It did queer things and resented being harnessed by our crude methods. We had every pool named from the 'bog-dam' to the 'end of fishing,' and a list of them hung on the camp wall.

I had almost forgotten the lookout tower we raised up, all built of pitch-pine logs with a platform and a bench on the top, and a rather precarious ascending ladder. Up there way over our chimney we could sit on a calm

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evening far above the mosquitoes and take in a really vast extent of country from the Manomet hills on the northeast to the tops of the islands in Buzzard's Bay on the south. Below us the delectable stream and in a hollow off to the westward Five-Mile Pond with its snow-white swimming-beach: Five-Mile where Hersey caught the gigantic eel that decorated the camp wall, where deer tracks marked the shore line and the arbutus grew so rankly on the south bank. But time again slips in, the tower began to rot, and in the end we took it down and burnt it up piecemeal in the fireplace.

Besides the stream we had a splendid little pond built on a small ice-cold brook where we used to keep a lot of small trout and when they were old enough we let them down into the main stream. But all good things in this world — at least the Eagle Hill sort — are certain to fade before the accusing finger of prosperity. That trout water was needed to flow bogs more than we needed it for our unproductive pleasures, and so one spring a great cement dam flowed the water three miles up-river to the camp. Even beautiful Seven-Trout Spring was flowed out and all the lower river became a memory. The trout held out for a couple of years and then gave up the struggle and committed suicide between the watchful jaws of swarming pickerel, all because the public had been taught to eat that detestable fruit, the cranberry, far inferior, I always thought, to the wild upland berry, *Viburnum opulus*, which I take it could be grown with much less mortality to trout.

We had heard for years of the great flights of geese that passed over the base of Cape Cod, flights that we never saw at Wenham. We had listened to the 'hairy'



tales of 'Baily' Gardner, first cousin to *Branta canadensis* and weather-wise prophet of Accord Pond. Indeed 'Baily' had paid us a visit at Wenham one autumn and taught us some of the tricks of the regular 'goosers.' We had watched him cast a sort of mesmeric spell over our own goslings and bend them to his anserian will, and we began to get the goose fever. Now this goose fever is a serious complaint besides being expensive like all other self-created diseases, for to satisfy it you must keep a great team of corn-hungry geese, must breed countless goslings each season, and operate a camp on one of the ponds which are rightly situated in the line of flight. When you get that far nothing will serve but an ever-increasing flock of decoys that are trained to set up such a babel of noise that you cannot make yourself heard when they are in full action, shout as much as you like. I know deluded persons who just like to lean over a goose blind fence and watch the sky, chew a few pine needles, speculate on the weather, and now and again fly their goslings. Talk about the contemplative art of



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angling: this 'goosing' has it shattered at the start. To pull a line, or a number of lines connected with the 'fly pens,' and let twenty or thirty full-throated goslings out into the air at once, to watch them circle the pond with the whole of your beach team stretched up neck high and braying like a hundred fox hounds, and then to see your well-trained flyers come circling back on slow-beaten wings and fold themselves gracefully to rest on the sandy point which you have made out in front — that is sufficient. Or almost sufficient. But when you add all this to the occasional momentous day when geese are moving, when you see a great flock of mile-high wild geese poise as if paralyzed at the shout of welcome you have started, when you see their wings stiffen and their bodies begin to rock from side to side as they slant back and forth in their sudden descent, till the whole air before you is filled with the crossing, scaling, circling, and fluttering of the now disorganized flock — then the ecstasy of the goose crank is at its height. It is fun enough to see geese come up low to decoys on one of our southern sounds, but pull a high migrating flock right out of the sky and you are treated to forty times the spectacle, if I do say it who ought to know. And at last the shot, if some jealous shore gunner does not spoil it, the least attractive part of the business, I dare say, and as a sporting proposition not up to the required ethical standard, but exciting and chancy enough for all that.

And so the fall of 1905 saw us ensconced in Old Man Baker's camp on the east shore of Oldham, only there was a good deal of sweeping and remodeling to do before we could permanently exclude stray reminders of the former owner's presence. We hitched together certain outlying buildings, built on a new sleeping-room and



dining-room, and erected a great aërial structure with a platform on top in order to give our goslings a good start. The old murky gun-room with a huge airtight stove was the only part of the original structure that we kept. Baily G. proved himself an admirable carpenter and Baily's father undertook to keep and breed the goose decoys at his farm not far away.

The Oldham blind had for years been a kind of meeting-place for the local sports who would come running in from all directions whenever the news was flashed about that geese were in the pond. The first flock that came in that season was the signal for the usual gathering, and a most astonishing sight met my eyes in the dim light of dawn when ranged up under the breastworks in all sorts of crouching attitudes, muffled up in their greatcoats, was a whole army of dead-silent figures, guns in hand. Indeed some looked as if they had been there all night. There was this about it, these local shooters were as careful and feather-footed as possible. Their grandfathers, the cobblers of the Pembroke district, were the

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first to attempt this method of taking geese and they were trained at it from boyhood. A group of cobblers — for they all worked at home on piece work — would join to run a little pond-side camp and keep a few live geese, working away at their shoes between shots, and it was a long time between. When they made a successful shot at geese the game was carefully laid out and one fourth went to the stand. The rest was auctioned off and bought in by those who shot them and the money went to the group that owned the stand. I have the scores of geese shot at the Island Camp back to 1876 and they show very plainly that, despite the fact that Oldham was a wild, silent place in those earlier days, there were far fewer geese killed there than now.

It is pleasant, when you get used to it, to lie in your bed of a frosty night and go to sleep with those old sentinel geese out there on the beach calling to their mates in the pens around the camp, a constant 'all's well with the night,' and now and then, especially if a wild flock flies over, swelling up to such a chorus that you sit up and try to make out whether the strangers are going to alight. Or if you are keen enough you rush out pajama-clad into the cold and peer off over the gloomy pond. On moonlight nights we kept a good watch until after midnight, up to the time when the law stopped night shooting. And it was comical too to see our flyers waddling up the long inclines we built for them to their pens on the flying-tower. We used to put thirty or forty goslings into the air at one time when we wished to start a racket and in the stand we had about fifteen pairs of breeders and a lot of old 'staggers' that had never mated. Some of these bachelors were pure wild birds that we caught and pinioned.

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I had a fairly good arsenal at Oldham and overtopping a couple of 'eights' there stood in the gun-rack a huge double-four bore that Kirkwood made for me. It weighed twenty-six pounds and we called it the 'gander' gun. Alas, it burned up in the fire that destroyed the whole camp on the last day of the season in 1911 and I can hear the reader say that it was a well-merited punishment.

We made some good shots and we made some mighty bad ones too at Oldham. One night, when the wind was blowing hard from the southwest and a misty moon was showing occasionally through the clouds, we lit an enormous flock. The light was perfect and we had four good men and true with four good guns 'to put over' when the proper moment came and at least forty geese to shoot at. I don't know to this day what happened, but when the racket of our guns died away we gazed out astonished at a bare pond with not even a feather to show for it. Yes, and I've seen almost the same thing happen several times, believe it or not as you please.

Oldham is intimately associated with memories of early morning rides from Boston and those were the palmy days when motors could be pushed to about any speed, for there was room and to spare. These rides began with a cozy little breakfast of hot coffee and buttered toast around four o'clock in my favorite ward at the City Hospital. And what is more to the point a trim and obliging night nurse, perhaps even a comely one, was there to pour the coffee. What better start could a goose crank make on a cold November morning, I should like to know? Warm and snugly wrapped we would then start on a wild ride of some twenty-eight miles through Roxbury, Quincy, the Weymouths, and



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the Hanovers, down with a sharp right-hand turn into Oldham road amid the pines just as the cold eastern light was beginning to show. There were speed records to be broken, and apparently that old gray car gradually acquired a reputation, for once a deputation of police from Quincy made a formal call on me at the hospital and asked politely if I would not slacken down a little while passing through their city. Just reflect, oh, you who fancy you are living in the heyday of motor transport, and consider how you would act if you received a polite call nowadays from a chief of police, all because you were driving well over the normal speed rate! I fancy you would pinch yourself and wonder whether you had crawled into a hole with Alice and her white rabbit.

Goosing on a large scale is all very well, but it's expensive, so after a time the camp was taken over by a club and I've scarcely been there since. The pond is now



## A SPORTSMAN'S SCRAPBOOK

almost ruined by a continuous row of summer camps that rather take the romance out of the place, but *Branta canadensis* still leads his squadrons thither each autumn and leaves behind him a few fat goslings to decorate Thanksgiving tables in Boston.

Mashpee Camp consisted of three sections of portable house set up at the head of tidewater on the famous trout stream of that name. And Mashpee Camp and stream were watched by Tom Mingo, a lusty descendant of those Indians who in 1833 decided that they no longer cared to be preached to by the ministers sent to them under an old grant from Harvard College. Therefore they raised an incipient row, the last feeble spark of resistance among the vanishing New England red men. Mashpee, where the alewives swarmed, where the sea trout came up in June, and where the whip-poor-wills made the spring darkness lively. Down in that hollow place the nights were so cold that even in mid-June we often slept in heavy blanket bags and woke up half frozen in the morning to cast open the doors and let in a flood of warm sunlight where the redstarts and parulas danced. Mashpee, where our wives reveled in the arbutus, and where you could hook trout under a real southern holly bush or cast your flies in the tides at Amos Landing. I do not know just what to say about that camp, for our trips were usually of the shortest and devoted entirely to the business at hand.

Bright days when we fished from eight o'clock to almost dark, when we turned in with tired eyes and a fisherman's 'head' brought on by the constant mirror of the dancing stream, and with fingers sore from unhooking those rousing fat trout. And in the morning when we

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looked out there would Tom Mingo be leaning gracefully against a pitch-pine tree with a fresh-run herring or two in his basket to be scaled and cut up into the choicest bait. Mashpee was convenient but not beautiful. The one who sat at the right-hand end of the table could cook and eat at one and the same moment, a great saving of morale when you have been at it all day.

There were other and later camps that I might mention, but they lack the glamour of the earlier ones. And the little 'inventures,' as my children call them, don't happen any more; we plan too carefully to allow them to encroach on our time and so we lose some of the interesting little surprises, picturesque experiences, and the memory thereof. We cannot weave the same romance around the camps of middle age, and if we tell of them the composition would have to be pitched to a different key. So be it. These later camps may have their solid satisfaction, but their place is not here.







### III

## GROUSE-SHOOTING WITH GEORGE



### III

#### GROUSE-SHOOTING WITH GEORGE

‘WHERE are we going next?’ we said.

‘Well,’ said George in a slow drawl, ‘you know that little bunch of hemlocks at the end of that cut-off lot where I drove one out to you last year?’

We said we didn’t.

‘Well, then,’ said George, ‘you know that little run back of the old Curtis place where them old apple trees are?’

George is nothing if not explicit. He will begin with the greatest refinement of geographical term and on closer questioning will reluctantly admit the town or county he is talking about. It is all perfectly clear in his own mind. I really believe he could minutely relate the details of the demise of every grouse he has shot there for the last twenty-five years. The surface of the earth, or rather the ‘grousy’ part of it he always divides very sharply into the following areas: ‘runs,’ swamps, corners, ‘rimmins,’ and ‘cut-off’ lots. Corners are the most important, and every bird theoretically occupies a corner. Now, if you are not rather familiar with George’s avian geography you are sometimes puzzled to tell a ‘run’ from a ‘corner’, or a ‘corner’ from a ‘rimmin.’ But George is never at a loss.

He will say, ‘You know that rimmin where one come out to you standin’ in the road and your gun wasn’t loaded?’ — and we frankly confess we don’t know whether he is talking about New Hampshire or Massachusetts. This is rather apt to hurt his feelings and he

will look at us as if to say, 'How can anybody be so fearfully dumb?'

So when George says he knows where there are some birds, we finally settle on the county and town and get down to business. Then the conversation will lead on somewhat as follows: 'How many birds did you find there, George?' 'Well, I started three,' he would say, 'and I got two of 'em and feathered the other one. I'd 'a' got that last old Biddie as sure as I'm standin' here, but I got my gun hung on a little birch twig and, afore I could pull it out free, she'd dodged behind a cedar tree and I had to just foller in after her. I see the feathers, most a hatful, come out of her, but I never could find her again. I'll bet that old girl never got up again wherever she went down.'

Then we would say, 'Well now, George, if you cleaned up those three birds, how many do you expect to find there now?' To such a question George would never reply, only chuckle slightly to himself and lead on across the field towards the covert. Whether he expected to find the ghosts of the departed in that particular covert I never could make out, but he knew the favorite 'hot' spots and just how often they ought to be hunted in order to give time for new birds to work into them.

With George grouse-shooting was a kind of relentless warfare carried on through the whole open season. The incidents which impressed him most and rankled longest concerned some super-fortunate bird that had got away out of a tight place or had been 'feathered' and lost. He would constantly hark back to a particular grouse which had aggravated him beyond common. Coming back from a day's hunt and passing by familiar scenes George would say to me, pointing out into the landscape, 'Right



## GROUSE-SHOOTING WITH GEORGE

over there, John, there's one old Biddy all right that I'll bet won't never get up again. I'll guarantee she's a meal for the foxes long before now,' he would continue; 'I don't think I ever see a bird carry off so much lead in all the years I've been shootin'.'

George was no doubt an extraordinary shot, but as he grew older and realized his limitation he became more and more conservative in picking his chances, so that the ratio between spent shells and dead grouse remained almost the same as it did when he was younger.

One season George underwent a severe operation and came out of the hospital a total wreck just about the end of September. It happened to be an excellent year both for grouse and cocks, and after we had hunted a couple of days alone and reported our good luck old George could stand it no longer. Although just about fit to stand up without support, he insisted on coming along and walking slowly around the 'edges' where he got an occasional shot. He carried a light twenty-gauge gun and for the first few days he shot really badly, and felt terribly cut up about it. But he kept right at it and in the course of ten days or so was doing his full day in the brush and shooting nearly as well as ever. A little thing like a patched-up duodenum couldn't hold George back after the leaves began to drop.

Theoretically speaking George never missed a shot or if he did he never admitted it. If the bird got away George would say, 'My gracious, John, you'd ought to come over here and see this little birch tree; I must have put the whole load right into it. That was a lucky old bird; if I'd only been standin' just a half a rod to one side she'd never have got away.' But in grouse-shooting accidents are the rule and it's the exception to make a clean shot

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with all conditions just as they appear on the cover picture of a sporting journal. One year we tried to make a list of all the excuses we ourselves had made for missing a grouse or a cock. Here are some of them:

I just had one leg over the d—— wall;

I got my coat hung on a barbed wire;

I was balancing on a darned big tussock and couldn't get set right to shoot till it was too late;

My gun wasn't loaded;

My gun wasn't cocked;

I was just warming my fingers and couldn't unlimber quick enough;

There was just one little maple tree in the way and that cussed grouse got right behind it and stayed there till she was a hundred yards off;

She 'broke' right out of a pine over my head and dove down like a stone;

I never heard her get up at all;

Didn't see her till she was a couple of gun-shots off;

She got up so darned close she about scared me to death;

She dodged just as I pulled and I don't believe I shot within a rod of her;

I got my gun hung on an alder and couldn't swing hardly at all;

I was too tangled up going through those grapevines to get onto her before she was away out about seventy rods;

I just shot into the blue to let you know she was coming;

I bored a hole right through that little white pine and I don't know whether I got her or not;

She buckled all up when I pulled on her, but she picked up and went off all right;

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I got some feathers off her back;

She never hardly left the ground and I couldn't see her at all;

She started right your way and I didn't dare shoot;

She was going right straight toward you and you couldn't help seeing her;

She went about six feet over your head and you must be plumb deaf if you didn't hear her;

If she'd just let me get up about two rods nearer, I'd sure have pickled her;

She went right into the sun and I never got a chance to shoot.

And so I could go on for an indefinite length of time. The grouse is a gallant bird; he takes awful chances and, with most people, he gets away with it. Sometimes he will run a hundred yards or more, but he never develops those extremely sneaky tricks that an old cock pheasant acquires.

It is easy to follow upland game on a good year when grouse are getting up before you all day long, and you go to sleep o' nights with the thunder of their wings ringing in your ears. Those are the great days that make shooting history, but there come lean years when by keeping at it from nine o'clock to five you cannot start a dozen. Most shooting folk get dismayed; even their dogs get careless and 'rangy.' Not so with George. Back he will go again and again into some cover where there were four or five birds and hunt as persistently as if there was a chance to make a respectable bag. A clean score is what tickles him most, whether it is three birds or ten.

We are often told that the worst thing a man can do in grouse-hunting is to raise his voice; that the dog should be worked on a low whistle and the hunters ap-

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proach their game by signals. In the main of course that is true, but there must be a difference in voices, for George could talk in such a soothing way to a fidgety old grouse that I verily believe he could get closer under cover of an ever running flow of conversation than most of us do without making a sound.

When his dog came to a point George would step up slowly and evenly, making as little noise in the brush as a cat, but carrying on a one-sided dialogue, somewhat as follows: 'Old Bow's right here as stiff as a poker, pointin' right out towards the edge: now you look out: bird must be right here: never saw the old dog point like that 'nless there was something pretty durned close; now you look out, she'd ought to be right 'tween you and me. Bow says she's mighty close all right, can't budge him a foot; maybe she's lying under that little savin: you get all ready now.'

And by this time George would be in just the right position and you, palpitating, perspiring with grouse fever, would suddenly hear the rumbling sound of a flushing grouse, then a shouted 'Look out!' from George, and then a roar as a ball of feathers hurled itself through the birches.

Of course George couldn't hypnotize them all, but he did it when he could and his line of talk steadied the dog as well as the crouching grouse.

I well remember one of George's favorite hunting yarns.

'About twenty-five years ago me and my cousin Len, we were both shootin' for the market then, went to "Eppin." We stayed at a farmhouse and we shot just seven days and killed seventy-seven grouse and one woodcock. I wished you'd of seen them birds hangin' in







## GROUSE-SHOOTING WITH GEORGE

the shed of the house we was stoppin' at. The neighbors come from all around just to see 'em, they sure did look pretty, hanging up there. Grouse was plenty that year and I don't think I ever saw them lay any better. Along the end of the week we had all we could handle. You weren't supposed to take any out of the State, so I packed 'em all into a great big telescope valise I had and I drove up to another station to take the train. Len, he went back with the guns and the dog by the regular way. Well, I got into the smoking-car and sat down with my valise — p'raps you don't think it wasn't heavy. At the very next station in came a couple of gunners with a pointer dog and sat down close beside me. Well, first think I knew that darned dog was on a stiff point right side of my valise. I didn't know what I was going to do. As luck had it nobody noticed the dog 'cept me. Well, we got to Manchester and it was snowin' to beat the cars, and I couldn't get no wagon to take me to my sister's house about two miles away. I just had to hoist that valise full of partridges onto my shoulder and hoof it, and maybe you don't think I didn't sweat. Must have weighed over a hundred pounds that load, and I can tell you I was glad when I got to my sister's house. Worst of it was, when I got there there wasn't nobody at home. I had to crawl into the front seat of an old wagon in the barn and there I sat most all night. They was out to a party or somethin'. P'raps I wasn't glad to see 'em when they did come; near froze I was and no mistake.'







#### IV

### THE GROUSE-HUNTER AND HIS PARAPHERNALIA



## IV

### THE GROUSE-HUNTER AND HIS PARAPHERNALIA

EVERY brush hunter is very much of an individualist, at least as far as the sport of grouse-hunting is concerned. Each one looks out upon his brother of the gun in condescension or sheer pity, and is certain as can be that his own dog, his own methods, his favorite coverts, and his general craftsmanship are superior to all. Therefore I am quite aware that a few notes based on one's own hard-earned experience will make no appeal to the initiated. The best one can expect is mild tolerance accompanied by a slight elevation of the *alæ nasi*. But such a prospect must not disturb the even tenor of these remarks.

On many a dim page able pens have described the glories of grouse-hunting, but times have changed. The gas-tainted hunter of the present day is more favored in certain directions than he was even fifteen years ago, for then roads, now well-nigh perfect, were hopeless hog wallows by early November. The hunter's field of operation is always enlarging, and success comes to him who develops the faculty of spotting likely places, storing them in his inner eye, and exploring them when he can. He may burn up two or three hundred miles in a single day, touch a dozen covers as many miles apart, and, if his selection is wise, start a good lot of birds with comparatively little physical effort. But he cannot do this without a great deal of personal knowledge or the help of a guide. There is still plenty of chance for skill and initiative.

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But in certain other ways the hunter of to-day is not so well off. Not only are grouse scarcer than they once were, but they are far wilder. Gone forever are the days when one could start forty or more in a half-day's hunt twenty-five miles from Boston without the aid of any transport except one's own legs. As I look back into boyhood days I realize that I started to hunt grouse just about ten years too late and took ten years too long to learn the technique. In all that period grouse were as safe in front of my gun as behind it.

It has often seemed to me that the foundation of success in this kind of hunting is based on learning how to walk, and particularly how to walk on rough ground so as never to lose balance. Second to this comes the ability to plough evenly and serenely through the thickest alder brake, ever alert, while the half-closed eyes are protected by the upraised left hand and the gun in the right hand used as a driving wedge against the brush. Were it simply a question of getting through and out the other side, it would be an easy matter, but the grouse-hunter must be prepared to shoot at all times and from seemingly desperate positions. The novice will push and fight his way through with no science as to the easiest road and with a fearful waste of energy. He comes out a disordered wreck, his patience exhausted, his face scratched, his nerves on edge, while the sky resounds with his imprecations. But watch the old-timer place every footstep where it will count, watch him slide easily from one little opening to the next, pushing gently and steadily where he knows he can win through, and always with ears pricked for the first indication of a rising bird. He never hurries. You can learn more by watching him at work than you can in any other way.



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In spying new ground you cannot always tell by appearances, for grouse retain a fondness for some spots that do not look at all likely. A good feeding place constantly draws birds from distant points and one need not be afraid to hunt often in a covert that has proved itself productive. Some of these 'birdy' coverts are good for two or three times as many grouse in a season as you can start at any one time. If you had a dozen of these spots on your calendar and were sure nobody would disturb them, things would be fairly easy. But at the same time you would lose the spirit of competition that comes with hunting a country that is open to one and all. The realization that you have gone out where the best have failed and stopped a half-dozen feather bombs by desperate chances in 'No-Man's Land' adds a good deal to the feeling of elation at the end of the day.

What makes grouse-hunting so fascinating is that success, real success, only comes when individual skill works in combination with many other factors. You may be the quickest snap-shot in New England, but you do not know grouse country. Or you may have tumbled into the best covert you ever found at the very moment your dog decides to take a day off and you cannot get a fair chance to save your soul. Or perhaps another day your dog works to perfection, but you yourself suddenly develop one of those abominable gun tricks which prevents you from 'connecting' with a single grouse all day. And just as surely as this happens you get ninety per cent of the shots while your companion trudges along solemn and full of thoughts.

But even supposing that you have one hundred per cent shooting ability plus an intimate knowledge of ter-

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rain, a planned strategy which appears flawless, and the dog you dreamed of, the odds, very big odds, would still be against you. That cannot truthfully be said of woodcock, bob-white, or snipe.

### DOGS

This is dangerous ground and dog talk would be avoided if that were possible. Everything that is said is certain to be shouted down by at least fifty per cent of brush hunters — possibly a few will tolerate, a sprinkling stand by with pity as the chief note, while a handful may sympathize. I shall be called a meat hog, a pot-hunter lacking all essentials of sportsmanship, but at least I cannot be accused of fraud.

The ideal grouse dog has probably never been born. As a general maxim you lose speed, style, verve, and show quality as you gain caution, trail-plodding, and the cat-like disposition in handling grouse that are the result of innate character plus long experience. The ideal grouse dog can be quite easily classified on paper, but in choosing a dog you had best forget everything you ever read and most of what you ever heard. You don't want a copper-plate dog that does this and that and behaves like a saint for his own breaker or handler. If you really want to get shots at grouse you need a sort of living death-on-the-trail, one that never forgets that he is hunting for you, and above all exerts a kind of hypnosis on the bird he is stalking. If you don't care how many shots you get and are content with a slim bag and an occasional spectacular bit of bird work, as many are, then pray read no farther.

I may as well admit that I have never shot over more than two or possibly three front-rank grouse dogs.

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Others in flocks passed through our hands, were relegated to inferior jobs, and soon forgotten. Judged by performance alone, 'Dave' (1912-1919) was probably ninety-five per cent perfect; 'Old Bo' (1910-1920) was eighty-five or ninety per cent; and 'Jock' falls lower to a grade of seventy-five or eighty. The pointer 'Bess' at times rose to heights, but not every day. This in about thirty-five years of contact with bird dogs. Remember that none of these dogs would have got a second look from a Field Trial judge.

Of number two dogs there have been dozens, and some of these were splendid field companions, but they were not 'dyed-in-the-wool' grouse dogs. 'Daisy,' a half-Gordon, was about the best all-round performer of these, a beautiful worker on woodcock, snipe, and quail, and often on grouse, but she was not essentially a grouse dog. So I could go on.

We can easily picture the ideal New England cover dog, but if he were ever produced, which I doubt, he must have left no imprint on his progeny. The thing *can* be done and would have been done long ago if there were any agreement as to what the type should be, but the several schools of thought are so widely at variance as to what should or should not constitute quality that the ideal is as far off as ever. Perhaps the grouse trials of to-day that are run on wild game under actual shooting conditions may lead to a better appreciation of the dog that I am convinced most of us really want.

So if you want a dog, a grouse dog, never let an opportunity to see one pass. If you are sure that you have seen him that is one in a thousand — and grouse dogs are not much commoner than that — don't let him slip through your hands. Buy him regardless, if you can,

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and, if you can't, chloroform him by the light of the moon and take him home under your arm. And by this I mean to convey that he will be more precious to you than gold, yea, even than much fine gold.

The last dog I bought that turned out anywhere near an ideal was purchased after a trial of about ten minutes in a New Hampshire swamp. That dog fastened onto an old trail of some sort, what it was I never found out, and worked it up high-headed in such a manner as left no doubt in my mind as to his capacity. He never even found a bird, but he went back home in my car, and turned out even better than I dared to hope. He still lives and money will not move him.

If I have gone this far and forfeited all respect from the purists, I may as well go a little farther. You want a dog that will really stop solid as soon as he is sure he is on a hot, workable grouse trail; not go wriggling nervously along just in front of you. He must have himself sufficiently in hand to let you walk by and ahead of him, or, better, one of you on each side of him; possibly no single test is more important than this. You should flush the grouse yourself as often as you can and let the dog merely show you where he is. Of course in most cases you cannot do this, but it schools your dog to extra caution to do it as often as you can.

And again, give me a dog with all four feet on the ground, or three feet at the least. If you get hold of one of the sort that touches the high spots only and seems never happy unless all his legs are doubled up under him, then sell him, bury him, or bring him down to earth with chains, check cord, entangling balls, or paving stones if necessary.

*Your* hypothetical dog, and mine too, should nail the



## THE GROUSE-HUNTER

dimmest scent at high speed, and never get in too close to flush, but with the average animal it is courting failure to allow him to develop too high a speed. Then, again, I often wonder whether the ideal speedy grouse dog, provided we could get him, would not make us too lazy. Would not the temptation to allow the dog to do all the heavy cover work finally become a habit so that our real hunting ability would suffer? For the best chances at grouse are those you get when the bird rises straight up in the densest brush and gives you a far easier chance than he does when you are outside.

If you really want grouse and not merely exercise, don't be mesmerized by your dog. You must be able to think grouse first and dog second. The moment the dog assumes the major rôle in the day's drama, that moment your hunting fever cools; then your woodcraft and shooting accuracy suffer accordingly.

### CLOTHING

Here again one ventures on thin ice and ice badly worn out. There is too much variety of taste in costume for any one person's experience to be of much value. But through the wear and tear of many a weary mile we can at least eliminate the non-essentials.

There is no reason why the grouse-hunter should not dress the part and appear more like a sportsman than a stoker. But for some reason the makers of American sport gear have decreed that he shall take the field in garments not only badly cut and rottenly put together, but disreputable in the *tout ensemble*. These badges of ignominy put him at a disadvantage in any dealings with his fellow man and if he is at all sensitive must breed a chronic inferiority complex. It was not always

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so. The sportsmen of fifty or sixty years ago showed far more originality in their costumes than we do to-day.

Starting at the anterior end of his body we commence our essentials with a hat which must not only shield the moronic brain, but shade the eyes and also protect the ears, particularly if they are of the winged or angelic variety. A frozen birch twig twisted against the flaring ear on a frosty morning is a real mortifier of the flesh. No hat is perfect; some prefer a floppy felt, but I never could keep one on in wading through heavy cover. Others like canvas material in various shapes, but canvas as well as felt is noisy with twigs scraping against it. You may fail to hear the first rustle of a grouse, and so lose a priceless second. When all is said, there seems nothing any better than a light cloth cap like those worn by New York gangsters or traveling millionaires. The passing twigs will not play a tune on this headpiece, unattractive though it may be, and the visor can be pulled down low over the eyes when working into the sun. Also it will stay on where any hat will, though, alas, it does not protect the ears, nor shed the rain. And it might be well to add that a light-colored cap will help your companions to keep you located and possibly it may save your life some day.

The gunning coat must first be as light as it can be and yet stand the racket. Far better too light than too heavy, for most of the time you will be hot. Even in very cold weather it is better to add a heavy waistcoat or a sweater than increase the weight of your jacket. Sleeveless coats are splendid — some such costume as the light khaki rigs worn by resident African hunters in Kenya Colony. As to game pockets, we don't seem to need as many as we used to, and I think it would im-

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prove the appearance of a coat if it were built for one or two birds rather than for a half-bushel of them.

Above the belt the brush shooter can get along with almost any combination if he has to, but below it he must be properly encased if he wants to derive any pleasure from a blackberry patch. Practically all the canvas trousers sold in our sporting-goods stores are abominable. Either they are too stiff and heavy or else too light, and always they are cut for the comic stage. You need some thickness over the knees and above them, but why encase yourself in the waterproof (so-called) mail-armor duck, the kind that stands up of its own accord and weighs forty pounds once it is soaked? The correct brush 'pants' should clasp firmly just below the knee so that when wet and heavy they will not drag too much on the belt. They should be light, but thorn-proof and not too long. But — and most important this — they must be pliable and as soft as velvet so that the knee is free in getting over walls and barbed wire. This counts in your favor at the end of a long day far more than a half-pound saved in the weight of your gun.

Shoes must be light; and as a rule ordinary length street boots, well broken in and then resoled with a rubberoid rough-surface material, are better than tall 'sport' boots. I would sacrifice waterproof qualities in order to lessen weight, for on fine autumn days the light boot will be dry anyway by ten o'clock in the morning, or as soon as the grass is dry. We used to think hobnails were essential and ruined all our hardwood floors before we found that the rubber sole with bumps on it holds nearly as well. Many hard looks from the ladies of our choice are thus avoided.

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I have never seen an American-made legging fit for brush work. The best kind is a light, stiff, moulded canvas puttee made with a steel front rib and fastened with a single strap and buckle at the top. These are made to order by Grant and Cockburn at No. 25 Piccadilly, London, and are so immeasurably superior to anything else that I would not hesitate to pay the rather exorbitant price, for they last a long time. Some are made with a leather facing around the bottom and these are certainly the best. This legging is very light, dries out rapidly, and never sags when wet. It gives your shin absolute protection and supports your trousers. Once I attempted to have these leggings copied by an American firm, but I tried it only once. The resulting product would not mislead a blind paralytic.

Late in the season, or even early if we have an autumn as wet as that of 1927, you may be forced into a leather-topped rubber moccasin like the Bean hunting shoe. At times, when swamps are flowed and brooks greatly swollen, you may have to stagger about with rubber boots, but these are a last resort. Usually one or two days will see them wrecked on a barbed wire or worn thin on the briars.

No socks are too good for the kind of tramping the grouse-hunter has got to do, and two pairs of thin wool ones are better than one thick pair. As he is certain to be wet a good deal the natural colors are better than the black, and extra socks and shoes will always be a good thing to have along in your baggage.

And to repeat, nothing is too good for a 'grouse' costume. There is just as much satisfaction in a suitable, well-fitted rig as there is in a made-to-order town suit.



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### THE COMMISSARIAT

Some are hardy enough not to worry about lunch; I enjoyed the privilege of youth once myself. But nowadays the noon whistle usually finds us headed for the car.



Sandwiches, I think, are an abomination, especially old soggy ones; so are the fancy picnic lunch kits to be had in sport stores at ridiculously high figures. We use for a container a plain aluminum-covered carpenter's tool box made by the Union Tool Chest Company, of Rochester, New York. It comes in several sizes. The one twenty-two inches long by eight inches wide and a little over eight inches high, having a folding tray in the top, is about right to hold lunch for three or four men.

Simplicity wins over style. In the top tray you can carry a few knives, forks, and spoons, and a corkscrew, also a few cigars and any other little jimcracks that you

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care for; in the body of the box a half-loaf of bread, a screw-capped glass jar for the butter, a cold duck or a piece of ham, some jelly and some cheese. Of the last item nothing is so good nor so handily put up as the imported Gruyère in round boxes.

There is room too for a small thermos of cocoa or tea, two or three enamelware cups, and some odds and ends of reserve rations, such as we used to call iron rations in war-time. Thus you will always have some life-saver in case of a slip-up in your plans. This box costs only five or six dollars, is light, and easily cleaned, and you can carry it comfortably if you have a lady along who insists on searching out a romantic spot to coax the gastric juice, rather than squat comfortably on the running board. Time is precious these flying autumn days and we do not waste much unless the weather is over-hot or showers of rain interrupt the sport.

Besides the grub-box we carry a similar box about half as large which does hardy duty as a receptacle for items various, about as follows: assorted shells, a 'Marble' hatchet, a couple of dog chains, a long check cord, a second dog bell, extra matches, extra pipes and tobacco, and also my shooting licenses, which if kept in shooting coats are sure to get left behind sooner or later.

A gallon jug of water completes the shooter's outfit, and sometimes in October this will be very nearly drunk dry in a single day. Alcohol ought not to be uncorked until evening if you wish to extract the best there is from a day in the woods.

### THE CAR

Any good closed car is all right for brush hunting, but it should be old enough so that the shivers won't run

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up and down your back every time you feel the oak twigs raking along its sides. The open car may be preferred for hardy youth or for short trips in the warmer part of the season, but for all-day cruises to distant grounds the closed car easily wins. Even on the first of October we have seen some of the most trying changes of weather to be met in a whole autumn and a wet skin on a frosty night is better shielded from a draft. The Franklin car is the ideal combination because it is light, turns easily in back roads, and can be left in any farmyard throughout the coldest nights.

It is interesting to supply yourself with a set of Geodetic Survey maps mounted on cloth and folded compactly, where you can mark down the location of covers you want to return to. If there is a box trunk on the back of your car, a useful permanent extra is a suitcase stocked with underwear, socks, flannel shirts, and a sweater. The dry underclothes may save you a nasty chill some day. Surgeon's tape and a bandage or two may be a wise provision in case of blistered feet or a sprain. Tire chains, of course, must always be with you.

It is a matter of choice how you carry your dog. The boxes made for the running board may be all right, but they block up one door of the car and are certainly not too comfortable for the dog. I prefer covering the back seat with some rough material and allowing the dog the use of half of it. This will not increase your popularity in the family, but it saves time in debarking at the cover. Besides, it is better for the dog.

## THE GUN

We need waste little time on the gun. I put this item last because, although given undue prominence in

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'sport' literature, it is the least important part of the equipment. If you are a good shot use a sixteen- or twenty-gauge gun as light as you can get it. If you cannot qualify on the small bores, you had better stick to an old reliable twelve-gauge. Two sets of barrels, one very short and open for early cock shooting and one longer and closer bored for shooting when the leaves are off is theoretically the correct thing. I have had such an article for thirty years, but strange to say the short barrels, although they are fetched out once or twice a season, never seem to satisfy and very soon are put away for a long winter's nap.

Almost any shells will do, but I think we are inclined to shoot shot a little too small. If sixes were used late in the season and even fours in the left barrel, lightly hit birds would not fly so far. About seven and a half is right for early autumn, and eights should rarely be used on grouse.





V

AFTER CHAMOIS



## V

### AFTER CHAMOIS

WE had been at Mentone a week and I was getting as stuffed up as a hand-fed Rhode Island duckling. Something had to be done. We sat in the agency of the dispenser of high-grade bungalows, commonly called villas in the effete language of the maritime Alps. We said, or rather the wife said, the while I sat pulling at my pipe: 'Monsieur desires very much to go and hunt the chamois.' The purveyor of bungalows was a tall, sallow man with a liquid, lovelorn eye of the fish-like variety that doubtless spoke volumes to the native feminine of the Côte-d'Azur. He gazed at me pityingly and asked, 'So, then, does Monsieur like very much the chase?' I in my very best French allowed meekly that such was the case, and we departed, the agent promising abundant and recent news from the High Alps in the course of a day or two. Promises are easy on that happy shore.

But nothing happened. Either the Madame or the agent, or, as I began to suspect in my dull Nordic brain, the two of them together, continued to stave me off from day to day, until arrived the morning when I rose up in my wrath and demanded complete satisfaction. Again we called upon the polished vendor of villas, and this time the Madame, goaded on by the conclusion that I really meant business, let fly with a wholesome vocabulary which soon began to produce results. The talk, of course, was away above my head, but occasional flashes of words such as '*chamois*,' '*là-bas*,' '*en haut*,' '*chiens*,' told me that at last we were headed uphill. The excite-

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ment grew apace. We dashed around a corner and into a bank where we fell upon the neck of an astonished clerk who, it seems, had once consorted with a chamois, but his vacation was up and he couldn't go now. Boys now began to run to and fro, the excitement became more and more generalized, so I loaded up the faithful pipe and tried to look intelligent. Then from out the sea of perplexity came a short man with a dirty shirt and a *vin rouge* complexion, towing behind him the largest police dog I ever saw. It seemed that here at last was a closer link between myself and the nimble goal of my desire, for our newfound friend actually had a father who lived in a hut in a very 'savage' place four hours' walk from the end of nowhere. I began to pluck up hope. 'And would the *père* be so good as to take out an over-fed tourist for a hunt?' 'Certainly yes,' no sooner said than done. 'And did Monsieur mind a small hut and a not very elaborate *cuisine*'; and, gazing at my nether ornaments, 'were Monsieur's legs *fortes*, for the country was steep and very savage?' Yes, even he himself had been up there not two weeks ago and had seen forty chamois. Ah, did he then shoot one? No, not so, but he had missed one at thirty metres. So? What a pity!

This time I came away feeling that I had gained a few steps on the chamois, so put in the rest of the day trying out my legs on a near-by hill and endeavoring to walk off a surfeit of fresh figs, Barsac, and other good things denied to unlucky dwellers in Bryan's Utopia.

The appointed day arriving, we set out in a Buick which had seen better days and was more adapted for a stroll along the Riviera than a struggle with the mountains. At the top of the first pass the water was boiling



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so audibly that we stopped, and our driver gingerly unscrewed the tank top. But in spite of his caution it blew off together with a gallon of rusty water, and the wind being from fore to aft we caught the whole of it and came near being disfigured for life.

Although it was a cloudy day, we had glimpses of sun, and we were both astonished at the brilliancy of the autumn coloring in these hills. I, who remembered a drab and dreary autumn in France, where the leaves of almost all the hardwoods turn a sort of sickly yellow and then gradually melt off in the gloomy October rains, was more than surprised and delighted. Here, indeed, against the pearly slate-colored rocks, were veritable blood splashes as brilliant as a New England maple swamp, although more scattered and trifling against their barren backgrounds.

A long descent, another long rise, and a second descent took us to Brioul, where we lunched beside a lovely trout river, 'La Roya,' which comes out of Italy, runs a little distance through France, and at last empties its waters through the Italian Riviera into the Mediterranean.

Soon after we came in sight of Saorge perched high up and clinging to the mountain-side like a great fortress above the river. A ladder-like road about two kilometres long leads up to it, but our motor would not negotiate the turns, so we walked.

I thought then, and I still think, that Saorge was the weirdest, quaintest, and most utterly grotesque town that I ever slept in. Were it not for the wide variety of its odors, one could imagine one's self wandering through some fairy tale of long ago. The slippery, cobbled central street, where the clank, clank of hob-

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nailed boots sounds strangely loud, is partly a tunnel and partly open to the sky, where the houses tower many stories above you, and arches, buttresses, and mysterious cave-like stairways appear on either hand.

At the far end we found the neat little house of Monsieur Poët, and thanks to my helpmate's French, the details were soon arranged. Madame had to leave then; as a matter of fact there was no place where she could stay the night, and after I had gone down the mountain with her I came back to 'Ma Maissonnette,' for so Monsieur Poët's house was called. Fetching a book along, I traveled up above the village and sat down for a smoke. Sunset came on all too quickly, and soon a stream of people with their cattle and loaded donkeys began heading down toward Saorge. Each group was a picture in itself. The ploughmen walked behind their driven oxen, carrying their one-piece wooden ploughs over their shoulders. Then came women with huge bundles of fagots on their heads and curious sickle-like knives showing in their belts behind. And there was group after group clattering down that paved way, besides great amiable bulls, who nosed me as they passed; timid little Guernsey-like cows, and tall rangy goats.

All the while great black clouds came floating over the high peaks, as they did almost every day at this season, but they seemed to be perfectly harmless and the air remained soft and dry even after nightfall, far softer indeed than on the seacoast only a few miles away.

Supper over, there gathered about the hospitable table of Monsieur Poët one or two peasant cronies and there was much talk of the coming hunt. I took the opportunity to slip out and see Saorge by the full moon,







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for it had cleared completely. Looking down on the place from the terrace in front of the ghostly, deserted convent of Saint Francois, flanked by two huge black cypresses, I saw a picture never to be forgotten. In the full brilliancy of that October moon, the little city, with its twinkling lights, its walls and dark purple roofs of rough-hewn slate, looked unreal, a thing belonging to an almost forgotten world. Indeed, I kept pinching myself and asking, 'Can it be real?' almost expecting the fairy vision — a subject, it seemed to me, for one of Dulac's illustrations — would fade even as I looked.

That night I heard each hour strike, twelve, one, two; the last our appointed hour for the start, but nothing stirred in 'Ma Maissonnette.' The Tartarin de Saorge slept on, dreaming no doubt of bounding chamois and mighty shots with '*chevrotine*' (buckshot) at forty metres. Far was it from me to disturb the hunter's dream. Anon came a great clattering up the street and soon a loud banging on the door, which, continuing for the space of several minutes, produced a faint and far muffled response. But once aroused, my newfound friend Tartarin, for so I am going to call him, was all energy and bustle. In a few minutes coffee was ready and drunk, two hounds snapped upon a chain, the guns slung over the shoulder, and the *musette* with its bottle adjusted. Going down the slippery, narrow steps, Monsieur Tartarin had much ado to keep his balance, for the dogs strained and yapped, all eager for the work ahead.

It was a lovely morning, or rather night. We picked up the *chasseur* cronies and a friendly *douanier* in uniform, bound for his post on the Italian frontier. And a great clatter we made, our hob-nailed boots squeaking, slipping, and sliding over the polished cobbles, the dogs

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anon winding themselves about the legs of Tartarin, and the air thick with expletives in low French, dog Latin, and high Italian. We dropped to the valley, crossed the Roya, and began the ascent of a lovely valley, a valley I shall long remember. In its lower end it was all figs and olives and vines, with little terraced meadows of brilliant green here and there. By and by we entered a deep and narrow gorge where the shadow of the moon fell dark, and the air was chilly with the spray of falling water. And why, I wonder, does the moonlight seem sometimes to temper the air? Have you ever noticed the chill you sometimes feel when walking from full moonlight into the shadow of a mountain?

When we came out of this gorge the valley expanded again, but it was a different valley entirely. On the steep slope facing north grew a noble forest and all the upper end had an alpine flora, the figs, olives, and vines replaced by northern shrubs, many different hardwood trees in the glory of autumn and great clumps of boxwood along the edges of the path. The whole valley murmured with running water, and on the right hand rose up fantastic cliffs and pinnacles of bare rock. Now, behind us, the first light of day appeared, and we walked for a fascinating half-hour when moonlight and daylight strove for mastery. Then the path tacked steeply up the valley side, and we came, about sunrise, to a little stone house, the hunting cabin of our Tartarin. As this was a typical deserted peasant's home of the region, it is worth describing in some detail. A huge iron key unlocked a rude door which gave access to the black, smoke-begrimed interior. There was no window proper, only a square hole closed by a rickety wooden shutter, which helped to regulate the draught for the fire. The

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roof was slightly vaulted and the room about square, the walls solid stone and cement. In one corner was the fireplace, only a few stones for resting cooking-pots, while a great chain supported a huge iron stew-pot. There was no chimney, only a hole in the roof with a little hood projecting below it for a couple of feet into the room, which served at times to carry out some of the smoke. In another corner were several bundles of fagots which Tartarin assured me was wood enough for a couple of years, although we in the North Woods would have burned it all to cook a couple of meals.

There was no furniture in the room except a few rickety three-legged stools, a table, and a shelf or two. White metal plates did duty instead of crockery. If you wanted to cook, as I found out afterwards when I essayed to make a stew myself, you had to crouch over the fire, which, if you so much as turned your back on it, went out. You then seized a three-foot bamboo pipe which stood against the wall, and, after rearranging the twigs, blew down lustily onto the coals until the fire blazed again.

The under room was reached by a separate door which led off a lower terrace directly into the animal cellar, or what had once been one. This had been furnished with straw and served as sleeping-quarters, the upper door being carefully locked before the occupants retired to the cellar to sleep.

A pot of coffee was now brewed, and the sun coming out strong, we sat in the doorway and made a breakfast of this with some native bread and cheese.

The donkey, which bore our provisions and Tartarin's extra gun, had not arrived. Still, it was planned that the two *chasseurs* and myself should go up the right-

hand side of the valley above the forest and take stands, while an hour and a half later Tartarin and his famous dogs would come up a certain gulch and attempt to drive a chamois out of it. We three crossed the valley, and the "organ-grinder" left us to ascend by another path. Our own path was steep, but soon we were in the shade of what I now saw was a fine forest of spruce and firs growing on a very steep slope, some of the trees at least two and one half feet or more in diameter and very tall. It was made more beautiful by a dense undergrowth of boxwood, amidst which bloomed, even at this season, many blue harebells, gentians, and asters.

Puffing our way — I had better say, my way — laboriously up, our guns slung upon our backs and not yet loaded, I happened to glance below the path and saw a live, yes, a very live, chamois jumping through the brush, going the same way we were, but in sight for a moment only. My host had told me that chamois lived in this forest, at least during the day, but I was scarcely prepared to find one so low down; and even now I cannot see any sufficient explanation for this. Why, long before winter, which scarcely begins until January, should these timid beasts come clear down to the valley bottom and haunt the thick timber, a position which I soon saw they were very loath to be driven from? I believe that this timber-dwelling habit must be an adaptation to a harried existence, for, let me say right here, that it is simply beyond belief that any large game animal can survive under the conditions that these chamois are called upon to meet. The valley bottoms are thickly peopled and full of stray dogs who rove about at will. The upper slopes are grazed by enormous herds of sheep and goats, and the shepherds carry guns.



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Even on the topmost ridges the chamois are not entirely safe, for here were army observation posts where soldiers came and went. Added to this you must remember that there was no discrimination as to methods of hunting and the season lasted, I believe, from mid-August until at least December.

But here this brave little beast carries on, and, as I soon found out, in fair numbers. It may be that the near presence of a royal Italian preserve, just across the frontier, contributes in some measure to their numbers in this particular spot. And here in an ancient worn-out and overpopulated land it seems to me more than likely that the strong-limbed descendants of these mountain-folk will have game to test their skill and woodcraft long after sheep and goat hunting in North America has become a memory. The difficulty of the chase of these chamois can be imagined when even the mighty Tartarin of Saorge himself admitted to me that in a whole season he and his friends never killed more than three, and this present year none at all.

But it is high time to renew our march up through the forest, on through the sparse-growing larches at the top to a narrow 'hog-back' where I sat me down and enjoyed a needed rest. It was a glorious day, and I thrilled at being again perched high up above the world and let my thoughts wander to the far Rockies where I had learned to love mountains. But then the spell broke. Below, a woodsman's axe throbbed away in the forest, and away above, a perfect army of goats with their jingling bells was advancing toward us. A poor place indeed for wild game, it seemed.

By and by away down the gulch I heard the jingling sleigh-bells of Tartarin's dogs and knew that he was

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coming up. Once or twice a dog gave tongue, but only for a moment. Nothing stirred and the morning wore on.

And now comes the least creditable part of my tale, but truth compels me to relate how I fell from grace and lost all chance of becoming a monument to American sportsmanship amid the Alpes Maritimes, and just as everything was going so nicely, too. Tartarin had appeared, Tartarin the mighty hunter with his snuff-colored jacket, his light gray hat, and double-barreled elephant rifle which cost a thousand francs, so he told me. The dogs went above me, and so I thought did Tartarin himself, but he must have gone back by another path. So, said I, this drive is over and the best thing to do is to join the duck-legged man who watches above so as to save him the trouble of coming down after me. I mounted and had just about reached my companion when the hounds gave tongue in so rabid a fashion that it was plain to all something was happening. Unlucky me, it was too late to run down to my original post; nothing to do but squat down where I was. Bang, bang, spoke the mighty rifle of Tartarin; still on came the dog, and then up popped the donkey-boy and with frantic gesture pointed to where that infernal chamois had crossed my earlier post at ten yards' range and was stretching away west and uphill. Yes, I had bungled it most beautifully, and when Tartarin joined me, his face black with Mediterranean wrath, I was not allowed to forget it. Fortunately, the hog-Latin he talked fell as mere thistledown on my innocent head, but his dark looks bespoke the worst.

We hurried after the dog, whose furious barkings had subsided over the next ridge, old Tartarin, in spite of his

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fifty-eight years and asthmatic diathesis doing a tolerable performance along the face of the mountain. Ahead of us was a wide open slide and on the edge of this I sat while Tartarin rushed down below where the quarry seemed to be circling about. Mortified and horror-struck at the unfortunate turn of events, I prayed that, should the chamois come my way, I should not complete my ignominy by a miss. In this slide there were continual little rocks rattling down, and each time I heard one I thought — I should rather say, feared — that the chamois was coming my way. These rocks kept me in instant and horrified suspense as long as I stayed there. Then I heard the organ-grinder, or was it 'Duck-Legs,' shoot, which relieved me mightily. Tartarin joined me, a little mollified by now, and we hurried on again. Bang, bang, a gun sounded from higher up, and after that it was all quiet. We could see the organ-grinder and the donkey-boy on the skyline of a distant peak gesticulating madly. The duck-legged man joined us. Yes, they had broken the leg of the poor beast, but now the dog had lost the scent, and the jig seemed to be up.

We spent another hour or so in spreading the dogs about, but without picking up any clue, and it now being well into the late afternoon, the *chasseurs* decided to go down to the valley by two different routes, hoping in this way to start up something. When Tartarin and I were about halfway down, his best dog working away through some rough timbered cliffy country on our left, there was a sudden roar from the hound's throat, and, looking far below at the foot of an open slide, I saw a coal-black chamois bounding across the loose shale to timbered cover on the other side. The dog was close after him, but this run lasted only for ten or fifteen

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minutes, for the beast soon shook the dog. This one, like the other, seemed content to stay in the forest.

We reached the hut before dark, and one at least of the party was dog-tired and ready to lean against the ground at any angle.

As it grew dark the huge iron pot was put to boil. I brought in a board, laid it on the floor, and so, stretching out with my rucksack for a pillow, was low enough to escape most of the smoke. From my dark corner I could look across to the fire where Tartarin in his shirt-sleeves sat on a three-legged stool, low bowed over the giant pot, his dogs sprawled around him with their paws almost in the embers. Beside him crouched the donkey-boy stewing the fine-cut leeks in a clay saucepan over a second, smaller fire. As we had heard much talk of this soup for twenty-four hours, I was full of interest to watch it in the making, an interest as personal as it was scientific, for I had taken no hot meal since the night before and had been on the move for sixteen hours. All its ingredients were picked up along the road as we walked, except the macaroni. A world of huge *haricots verts* with beans as big as one's thumb, and potatoes cut small, formed the basis. Chopped macaroni and, I believe, some vermicelli went in later, as well as the leeks, some few tomatoes, sugar, and oil. The while it simmered, the talk drifted to valiant shots of by-gone days, with frequent aimings and squintings and 'boom-booms,' to lend reality, followed by vivid imitations of the hare's or chamois's rapid get-away or tumble, whichever the case might be. There was much talk, too, on the relative merits of *chevrotine* or *bal*, and the misfortune of the day was repeated twenty times at least.

Poor, simple, deluded peasant *chasseur* of the Alps,



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thought I, you too have seen the dawn on the high places, have felt the breeze from off the snow peaks, and watched the lofty spirals of the circling eagle. Poor in most things, it is true, but rich in memories that none could take away. You squander a month of work to chase a problematical meal and would sooner see your dog well fed than feed yourself. You count the cost, like other brothers of the rod and gun, and consider yourself well paid in the end if only you can now and then thrill to the music of your hound; you, who are the picturesque remnant of a dying breed no more of any use and scarcely tolerated at all in a wholly practical or squeamishly sentimental world. Your course is nearly run, but make the most of your simple joys, for you are the last of the heavy-browed men who battled at spear length with mammoth and cave tigers in the dim history of Europe.

The soup was as coarse and filling as the surroundings were squalid and smoky, but it occupied a crying vacuum and served well enough, with a top layer of bread and cheese. Then the dogs must be carefully rationed with bread and a pot of vermicelli put on to cook especially for them. Indeed, they seemed to fare quite as well as anybody.

The organ-grinder, who was the undisputed wit of the party, gave one or two songs and a recital which I should greatly have liked to understand, and then Tartarin, seizing a candle, locked the door of the upper room and led the way to the sleeping-cellar. The donkey-boy forked over the straw a little and we lay down side by side, the dogs between and over our legs. And now comes the 'dim horror of my tale,' for I had a position between the organ-grinder, who was the dirti-

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est of the lot, and Tartarin himself, who pitched, rolled, groaned, and snored by turns. Every few minutes a hound would creep a little closer, and anon a couple would come into a proximity, betokened by many growls. Then, too, they all had little sleigh-bells to their collars, and this aided in keeping up a constant racket. The bad air, the noisy snoring of Tartarin, who every few moments attempted to roll me atop of the organ-grinder (the fate I most dreaded), and the altogether novel surroundings rendered sleep out of the question.

But at last it was four-thirty and time to arise and brush away the straw. The donkey-boy, most fortunate of all, was allowed to sleep on with the whole cellar to himself, and I could not help casting a longing glance upon him as I crept out into the darkness. After a cup of coffee the organ-grinder and I climbed the mountain back of the hut and waited for hares, while the duck-legged man went off by another route to unleash his dogs, and Tartarin stayed behind to tidy up the house.

My post was particularly cold and disagreeable and absolutely nothing came my way; in fact, they could not start a thing that morning. Across a steep gulch from where I sat and shivered a little man came out from a little house and with his tiny axe, pounded out a few chips to boil his coffee with, then vanished. After a little he appeared again, a huge faded blue cloak hanging from his shoulders and a gun slung on his back. He opened a low door in a little stone barn and there belched forth to my astonished gaze at least a hundred sheep and goats which went tinkling away up the mountain-side toward higher pastures.

That morning I stayed behind to rest while the *chas-*

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*seurs* again ventured forth for a chamois drive. I took the opportunity to cook myself a gorgeous pot of soup; and let me say right here, that cooking over one of those tiny twig fires is an experience in itself. Time and again I would leave the blessed thing blazing merrily and the pottage stewing away with a goodly sound and go out to have a look around for a minute or two. Then, when I came back, I would find the fire practically out and the soup starting to cool; only a vigorous use of the bamboo pipe as a blower would coax the fire back to life.

But this tale is altogether too long as it is. I had to leave before the others and never even got a shot at a chamois. On another hunt we drove out a herd of twenty-one that went bounding out of the upper edge of the forest to pastures far away, leading our dogs a hopeless race to a far country we could not hope to reach. It seemed that one or two animals would play around ahead of the dogs fairly well, but a herd was much more timid and would not stay in the neighborhood any longer than they could help. Whether it would be possible to stalk chamois in these parts, I do not know, but I rather doubt it. For one thing they are probably almost nocturnal in their feeding habits, and have a way of lying up in heavy cover all day. It might not be so in August and September, when they are said to be in much higher and more open ground.

The time came for me to leave and I took my departure from Tartarin's little stone hut at the head of the nameless valley accompanied by the donkey-boy and his tall, lanky beast of burden. Whether my *chasseurs* companions managed to bring down a chamois on that hunt I never did hear, but I wish them luck and many a valiant chase yet. Hardly could I realize in

those few days that a short twenty miles or so away, as the crow flies, reposed in all its tawdry splendor the great casino of Monte Carlo, where stony-faced *croupiers* squatted all day around the crowded tables walled in by world-weary relics of humanity. Yet, while the sun-baked Riviera had become the idling ground of a degenerate Europe, Tartarin's hunting grounds scarce appeared to have suffered any change since Columbus sailed.

One more night I spent at the Tartarin home in 'Ma Maissonnette' and wakened to the now familiar clatter of hob-nails in the cavern-like streets below. Once more I took my pack upon my back and walked to the foot of the ladder road which leads up to Saorge, little dreaming that the most thrilling portion of my little adventure still lay ahead.

When the great red auto-bus, crammed to capacity with Italian peasants, came snorting its way around a corner of the cliff that overhung the Roya River, I took the last place with innocent satisfaction. And then, oh, then did I begin to wish I had chosen a different method of progression, for as we tore down those mountain roads, swaying from side to side around frightful curves, my heart fairly rose in my gorge, and let any one who seeks adventure try out the old red bus that bays its way out of Italy to Mentone and Nice. The price is moderate — some ninety cents it cost me for a four hours' trip — but I got a hundred dollars' worth of thrills. And my fellows on the inside, and the outside too — for they rode even on the mud-guards — were well worth the price of admission. Should I tell the story of the family with the communal toothpick, or the five-year-old boy who battled his mother to a standstill,



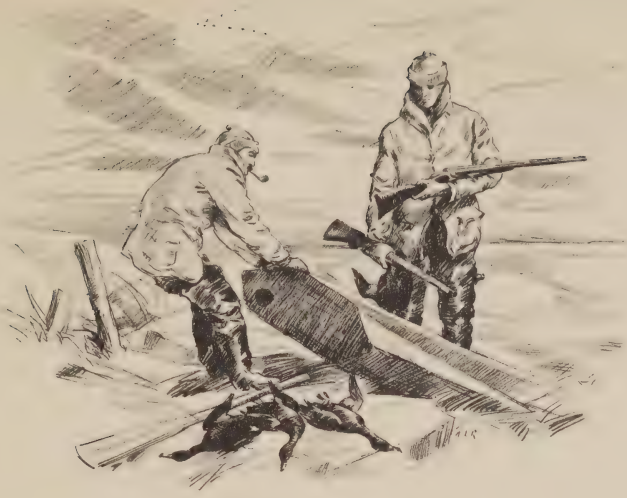
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of the flies, the garlic, the sausages, and the *vin rouge*, I never should get through.

At last, nevertheless, I arrived at Mentone, very stiff, cramped, and contented, carrying as fine an assortment of *petites bêtes de chemise* as ever arrived upon the Riviera.







VI  
NIGHT SHOOTING





## VI

### NIGHT SHOOTING

I SUPPOSE the New England duck shooter has resorted at one time or another to almost every device, foul or fair, for taking game. Most of the duck tribe were always scarce on our sterile coasts, partly from an absence of proper feeding grounds and partly from the fact that our whole region lies too far to the eastward to catch the great northwest to southeast flights of the more desirable waterfowl. Add to these enormous drawbacks a pretty generous sprinkling of large cities and busy harbors and it is no wonder we are hard put to it to get our share of duck shooting.

And alas, some of the most attractive and exciting forms of the fowler's art have been classed among the rising tide of prohibitions. No longer can we shoulder our fowling pieces as the winter sun drops low, and battle across a windswept tidal marsh with a 'gunny-sack' of decoys on shoulder to 'lie alone' under a mud-bank at the magic hour when the black ducks flight in from the sea. How tensely we waited as the pink faded in the west and what a thrill sped up and down our shivery backs at the first clean-cut whistle of an incoming bird!

Mostly, the ducks had all the best of it, but the hour or two spent gazing over the seaweed bunch decoys, as gradually they and the live decoys merged into the surrounding gloom, was never tedious — something was sure to happen. At last our straining ears caught the regular swish-swish-swish of advancing ducks, and then

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suddenly we saw those marvelous black silhouettes as a troop of 'duskies' cut in, and with down-curved wings and lowering necks crossed the still rosy band of western sky. Blam-blam, cracked the ten-gauge, and as the sparks blinded you might hear, if you held rightly, the grateful 'plunk' of a duck as it hit the salty mud.

And who can forget watching alone in some goose blind on a gusty moonlit night in November, kept at fever heat by a beach team of sixty live decoy geese, restless with the urge of the flighting season upon them? They called lustily or listened for the passing flock as we watched the tossing moon riding the hard-driven clouds that ever charged up the sky from the southwest. It is a goose night, and we must watch in relays, for perhaps not again in the whole season will there be a better chance for a big shot. Now look how eagerly the beach team straightens up, a forest of snaky necks, and blares forth a ringing chorus of trumpet calls — a new cadence that means their keen ears have registered a note from the mysterious sky; a note which you have missed. Now the tethered birds are pouring aloft such a volume of wild music as you would go many a mile to hear. You search the depths of night for the cause of their clamor, and at last here they come; on sliding silent wing; without a murmur, the ghostly flock passes across the moon, turns and settles a mile distant upon the ink-black water.

Sleepy forms shivering in impromptu garments steal out bareheaded from the hidden camp and glasses are leveled over the fence. Yes, we can just make them out, and whispered questions pour forth from huddled heads. How far are they? What are they doing, and will they give us a shot?







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And amid anxious scufflings of rubber-shod feet the full-charged guns are set up in military order. Endless minutes pass as the wild flock is making up its mind whether to steer for our sandy beach or wait till morning before investigating the shore. And so perhaps, some return to their bunks to sleep nervously, while others sit it out, staring at the camp stove waiting for dawn.

Or it may be that the new arrivals like the look of our beach, gleaming white and tidy in the moonlight, and cautiously edge up to windward. And then, O you goose shooters of feeble brain, you who ought to be snug at home by all the dictates of common decency, be sure your night-sights are carefully stuck to your gun muzzles and forget not to allow for over-shooting, or your shot will fly wide above the heads of your would-be victims.

But the method that took by far the greatest showing of skill was 'floating' for ducks at night on the moon, preferably when the ice cakes were running in the creeks. Not only did the man who sculled require a nice wrist and a stout arm, but he had to know every foot of his ground; just when he could cut across the marsh on the top of the tide without being left high and dry, just where the slush ice formed and where the first good feeding banks would show up as the tide ebbed. And he must know how to take advantage of the drifting ice so that he could work his float among the cakes yet never touch one, for if he did the sound might be disastrous. And the bow man must know a little too, and above all, his blood pressure had to be up to par and his hands as tough as an oysterman's or he could do little when the painfully won moment arrived. Ye gods, how cold the steel barrels felt to the mittenless hand!

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One night came near being my last in a float, mine and Tom's too. There was quite a tumble of water and we were setting up to ducks, the bow moving up and down in response to the sea. It was very dark and difficult to make out anything. So intent was I to get the gun bearing right on the ducks, which were mere blurs on the inky water, that I did not notice the bow of the float which moved up across gun vision just as I pulled trigger. The charge missed my foot by half an inch and cut a large hole through the boat below the water-line. The water began to spout in, but luckily we were near a bank where we could land and make temporary repairs.

A winter night in an Ipswich gunning float was an experience even for an Arctic explorer. Here is an account of a typical hunt, one that I described many years ago for 'Forest and Stream':

### BLACK DUCK ON THE NORTH SHORE

The well-known ring of the alarm clock awakes us. It is 11 P.M. and we have been snoozing for some hours. We get up, yawning and reluctant, for it is February, and somehow ducks don't seem as important as they did over the pipes a while ago.

Stepping outside the door, we find ourselves in the full beauty of a midwinter moon, lighting up for miles the long stretches of ice-coated marsh and glistening tidal creeks. There is hardly a breath of wind, the tide is nearly full, and altogether the prospect for a successful night in the float is so good that we take heart and disregard the warning mercury, which has dropped to twelve degrees.

In a few moments we have assembled our outfit, consisting of two horse blankets, a sculling oar, and an

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eight-gauge and twelve-gauge gun. Observe that the eight has an enormous drop, and when we come to take a sitting shot while lying nearly flat the advantage of this is readily seen.

Dressed in white from head to waist, we hasten to the float, which is lying well above the water mark on the great blocks of ice along the shore. It is painted as white as its surroundings, and when seen from the front looks almost exactly like the ice itself.

We embark with as little noise as possible, for there is no telling how near the crafty old black ducks may be lurking. I take my place in the bow, lying flat on my back, with my head elevated just enough to enable me to see over the front rail. Tom is furnishing the means of propulsion. His feet are on each side of my head, and he, too, is flat on his back with the handle of the scull-paddle running under his left armpit. I wrap a blanket carefully about my feet, cock the eight-gauge and lay it across me with the stock almost in shooting position and the muzzle in the bow.

Once off, I have a chance to recall the fascination of a winter night in the marsh. The clear air, the silent and mysterious motion, and the Arctic surroundings, are such a change from the city I have left only twenty-five miles away that it seems hard to realize this is the same world. We glide ahead just as the ice cakes are floating up the creeks, only we gain on these and slip by them silently. To the east the snow-covered dunes of Plum Island loom like a mountain range along the horizon and shut out the ocean, while on either side the frozen creek banks rise strangely tall and shine like marble. Nothing can be heard save an occasional gurgle as the ripple from the passing float strikes the hollowed edges

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of the ice. But what is that whitish patch ahead? It is slush ice forming, and we can do nothing but try to make through it. With a slight hissing sound the bow of our craft pushes in, and a quack, a roar of wings, a dozen shadows in the air bring me up like a jack-in-the-box. A warning from Tom and I lie flat again, for the ducks are too far, and we never take a shot unless it is a good one, for the noise will stir up many birds which otherwise might give us a chance.

We push through the slush, and soon see three ducks in a streak of white water ahead. They must be over two hundred yards away, but so wonderful is the light that they loom as big as geese. Now the utmost science of the sculler is brought into play. We creep ahead without the slightest ripple or sound, our bow pointed exactly at the ducks, whichever way they swim. The moon is ahead, there is floating ice enough to make our deception perfect, and we are pretty sure to get a shot. I have pulled my hands from under the blanket, and now they are freezing against the cold steel. In a few moments I feel they will be too cold to pull on the trigger. Fifty yards! My eyes are glued to the water, and when I see one long neck stretch up, I know I must shoot, and do it quickly. I push the gun butt under my arm, rise very slowly for a few inches, and then, catching two together, pull on them and see only one rise.

By the way, it is very strange how plainly you can often see these ducks at night a long way off, and then, when it comes time to shoot and you raise your gun, all trace of them vanishes, or at best a shadowy sort of blur remains.

We pick up our pair, one of which gives us a chase, and then scull still farther northward. We see ducks



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continually, and hear now and then the whistle of wings as a bunch changes its feeding grounds, but something always prevents our getting near enough for a shot. Perhaps the moon or wind is wrong, or perhaps the birds are sitting where it is impossible to scull a float, or again the surroundings may be so dark that the shy old fellows stretch their long necks at our white boat fully a hundred and fifty yards away, and then with a parting quack disappear in the gloom.

We are now ascending the Rowley River against a searching westerly breeze which has just risen and is fast penetrating to the innermost parts of my body. The beauty of the night fails to impress me any more, and all my senses are on the alert for ducks. Another hour of this and even the ducks will fail to interest, as I lie shivering in the bow, counting the minutes till we can reach the stove side.

A whisper from Tom, and as I peep over the ice bank to our right I catch sight of a black mass on the thatch. They are ducks, a large bunch, and carefully the float is worked up till its side touches the bank. We discuss the advisability of a shot, for it is a long chance. And then I decide to try it. Carefully slipping in a BB shell, I point the gun, elevate it some inches, and shoot, stopping one bird.

We disembark, pull the float across a piece of mud, and while Tom paddles after the duck I dance frantically up and down the bank in a vain attempt to start the blood going.

By this time the tide is ebbing fast, and we drift toward home, keeping along close to the mud-banks, which, newly arisen from the water and scraped clean by passing ice, offer a good feeding ground. A pair whirl

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up not fifteen yards from the bow, but before I have brought the gun to bear on them they are eighty yards away and I lie down, muttering a few adjectives. Buz! Whiz! and two more shadows are hurled into the sky. This time I am a little better, and in the blur of the distance I can just see a falling shape. I get out on the marsh and look around everywhere, and, after narrowly escaping a ducking in a salt hole, I see about two inches of the tail of my bird projecting above the snow.

Our cruise is again continued with varying success. We hear the wheezing of drakes and soft chatter of ducks, and soon see a bunch of nearly a hundred lying like a great black raft ahead of us. Just as we think we may get a shot the ever troublesome slush ice intervenes, and with a roar the flock rises like a great fan shooting into the sky.

I succeed in making another wing shot on a single, and then, as we swing round the corner of a high mud-bank, I catch sight of a small flock just in time to pull on them before they scatter. We pick up four ducks, and well satisfied give it up for the night, and start for home. I seize an extra paddle, and soon the exercise has warmed me so that when at last our bow grates on the pebbles I can scarcely believe that I have been suffering from cold.

We find it is 3:30 A.M. We have been out four and a half hours, and have eight black ducks to show for it. Not a large bag, but one to be proud of when you take into account that of all the wild fowl race the 'old blacks' that winter off the New England coast have developed the sharpest intellects. From constant persecution, these birds have become practically nocturnal, spending the day in the open ocean and resorting to the

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creeks and marshes after dark, or in daytime only under great stress of weather.

The time-honored custom of 'creeking' after sunset, which is practiced almost everywhere along the shore, is not nearly so successful as it used to be, and the above is a sport which has been to me one of the most exciting forms of duck shooting. Floating at night is sometimes quite successful; at other times only fairly so, and more often not successful at all. It can only be used on calm, bright nights, so that sometimes during a whole moon there may be only one or two really favorable opportunities.







## VII

WARBLERS AND ARBUTUS, WITH NOW AND  
THEN A TROUT



## VII

### WARBLERS AND ARBUTUS, WITH NOW AND THEN A TROUT

DOWN on the south shore of the Bay State, from the head of Buzzard's Bay, out eastward almost to the elbow of the Cape, lies a belt of country cut by numerous little streams and rivers all flowing south and discharging into salt water creeks and marshes. Adapted especially well for trout, and highly peculiar in many of their features, their virtues and attractions have never been properly recorded either by the poet or the fisherman. The mountain streams of the Berkshires, the highlands of New Hampshire and New York have attracted their share of praise, but the lost waters of the 'Cape' should be sketched into the annals of New England field sports, before their very channels are forgotten.

For every spring, as the afternoon sun begins to linger warmly in the city streets and the elm buds thicken, our thoughts wander to these streams of our boyhood. We cannot curb this feeling of persistent unrest; even the motor horns cry out with a new and more plaintive lament, and the warm breeze bears upon its wings a disturbing taint of oil. These are the opening days of the trout season in Massachusetts, days rich with memories; memories of streams which long ago have ceased to exist, resolved now into chains of man-made cranberry bogs or flooded to provide reservoirs with which to flow them. Memories of care-free fishermen who have years since taken their last trout, and of others grown so serious-minded and so swamped with

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responsibilities as to lose all inclination for expressing the animal-like joys of the season.

These lines are not addressed to the super-æsthetic, be he fisherman or not, but to lucky characters like some I know, whose childlike minds, unaffected by the race of time, have preserved a boundless spirit of the spring.

I think it is the sheer simplicity of the 'Cape' woods that convey to the city-weary fisherman an indescribable feeling of rest and peace. Only a few forms of vegetation interrupt the eye and those mostly of a green and friendly sort. Here even the shrub oaks are loath to expose their naked branches until far into the winter. If you come across from Plymouth over the rolling and once much-burned pine barrens you will get, especially on a cloudy day, the most amazing color effects, for the shrub oak hillsides take on a mauve and plum-like bloom against the intense yellow-green of the pitch-pines. Perhaps this startling effect is due somewhat to contrast and intensified also by reflection from an inky-looking sky, but mostly I am convinced it is due to the actual color of the twigs of these dwarf trees that have just felt the new rush of sap in their tardy branches. But they do not look purple close at hand.

The shadbushes, those perfect almanacs of our hesitating New England spring, have not yet brightened the landscape, although around the city they may be fully blossomed, for be it known that the southwest wind from Buzzard's Bay and Vineyard Sound blowing across the 'Cape' over a still wintry ocean is as cold as a northwest wind at Boston, and all vegetation along the south shore is very far behind. Along the cold springy margins of the trout rivers it is even more delayed, which enables you to watch to full advantage the whole warbler mi-



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gration amid bare trees and shrubs at a time when those little birds are screened by budding vegetation in other regions near by.

In the woody places the evergreen inkberry bushes glisten among the rugged mossy pines; vivid andromeda and sheep laurel brighten the little round swamps, and in a few sheltered spots are some real holly trees. All these contribute to please the eye, so long used to the dreadful drab of our northern winter landscape and we seem to have come a long way south in a short sixty miles.

Although we are here to catch trout, we must notice other things: the tiny pink bells of the upland cranberry along the double-rutted, sandy cart tracks, and if we look ever so closely a white star buried among dry oak leaves. Down must we go on all fours scratching like the noisiest cheewink among the partridge berries, sending last year's papery oak leaves flying, and suddenly exposing not one but a whole chain, maybe several chains, of white or pinky-white flowerlets. You who never have gathered arbutus will hardly realize the sport, the woodcraft, the friendly rivalry, and the rush for an even likelier bed. Never know the mushroom-like smell of the fresh-pulled stems, the very essence of spring-thawed soil, mixed with the priceless odor of the flowers themselves. That odor so intoxicating to the senses. You lose that earthy root-smell after a little, though the flowers may keep fresh for days, and even in their final decay give out, scarcely diminished, their exotic, almost overpowering scent. What would the perfume makers of Grasse not give for an acre or two of our Cape arbutus to bottle up for the mirrored boudoirs along the Riviera!

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No one who has been there can quite forget the thrill of the first April day upon the Agawam, the Mashpee, or the Slug. There was something so entirely different about the surroundings of those streams, and their waters were so clean and pure, so even bank-full and so seldom in flood that they had a more permanent, a more perfect look than many another more famous. They never shrank to a greasy trickle in summer, or hid away



amid rank tussock grass so that you could scarce follow their windings. Those Cape streams were gentlemen streams for all of their few short miles. Their beds were hard sand or bright beautiful gravel and the water flowed along under lovely clumps of andromeda, sheep laurel, or thickets of wild roses, dwarf alders, and little stunted birches. Then they would go murmuring deep through the heart of a pine and maple swamp and the sun shone through the gray-green beards of the usnea moss or sparkled on the scarlet flowers of the maples

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themselves. They did not rage around slippery boulders or roar down in troublesome falls, but their courses led them from gentle rapids and sparkling ripples into great pools that hollowed out caverns under the fantastic roots of a stunted, druid-like beech or maple, or anon burrowed down various back channels where ice-cold springs crept in under beds of the cleanest sphagnum moss.

Formed by nature to support a great wealth of fish life, instead of getting warmer, as most streams do in their descent, they actually grew colder clear down to tidal water. I often took midsummer temperatures in the Agawam through the 'sandy stretch' down past Eagle Hill to Glen Charlie Pond, and always found the water several degrees colder downstream than upstream. It was this interesting condition that made these Cape streams possible for the ever-elusive sea-run trout, for these phantom-like fish could run to tidal creeks in winter and up into cold water in stream or pond when the ocean water got too warm. So you mostly had two rather different types of trout. The ghostly wanderers from the bay that came and went like shadows in the night, but did not usually appear upstream in numbers until mid-May or later, and the longer, thinner, darker brook trout more or less independent of the sea-run habit.

Up these pearly white streams in late April, May, and June came great shoals of alewives to their spawning grounds in the ponds at the headwaters. We would stand on some bridge or near a sandy open piece of water watching with never ending fascination these mighty hosts forging up against the current, now fast, now haltingly, now in sudden panic forced back, the van-

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guard rushing upon the rear ranks until the whole vast army was in a turmoil and entire silvery regiments were splashing about on the sand bars, forced out of water by the pressure of their crowding companions.

We loved to see the alewives because the big sea-trout followed in their wake, although it was sometimes impossible to throw a line with any chance of success until one alewife army, charging up on the flood tide, had paraded past and left a quiet interval before the next arrived.

There were other fish too, the most beautiful, as well as the rarest, the small red-fins with brilliant blood-red paddles that we used to take occasionally in the upper Agawam along with hundreds of the common brook chub that were a positive nuisance at certain seasons. Great suckers as much as two or three pounds in weight came up the streams in May, and sometimes we would man a canoe and pole up the 'sandy stretch' above Eagle Hill to try for them with a spear. These great fish always gave you a thrill, for in quick water they looked like grandpa trout. They loved the deep, still sandy pools, pools usually avoided by trout, but darting a spear at them in moving water from the bow of a canoe was far harder than it looked, and successful strikes were the exception. But it was a novel method of fishing and required pretty good team work between the spearman and the paddler.

Eels, of course, came up at times, and some of our greatest disappointments were connected with their taking, for a smallish eel on a light rod can simulate for a few moments a very heavy trout. I can scarcely attempt to describe the sensation which comes over the elated and breathless angler when his soaring hopes are shat-



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tered by a sudden view of the nasty little black head of a wriggling eel attached to his leader, the hook always swallowed in toto.

There may be better trout to eat than the native trout of Eagle Hill Brook; there may be fatter ones, whiter-sided, and more elegantly shaped; but I have never seen them. Even a little two-year-old fellow of six or seven inches has all the perfect grace of a salmon in miniature, almost the same type of coloration too, with his belly and sides so white that the pink spots are never a prominent feature. We seldom saw in Eagle Hill those slim dark snaky fish that are typical of other Massachusetts and New Hampshire streams, long-headed, under-shot, with tapering bodies and wide brilliant-red spots, although dark fish do occur in Red Brook where the water is stained. The color of Eagle Hill fish was in perfect harmony with the silvery sands and brilliant white or golden-yellow pebbles that paved the floors of their home, and their rapid growth and thickly muscled bodies were made possible by a tremendous supply of food; salt water minnows, smelts, and shrimps. In the spring their stomachs were just crammed with caddis larvæ, water beetles and helgramites, while in late summer they were provided with millions of young alewives caught on their first migration to the sea. These were happy, lucky trout.

I have sketched after a fashion some of the features of these lost Cape streams and hope that I have pointed out the reasons for thinking them unique. There are others somewhat similar, so I am told, on Long Island, but of them I cannot speak except at second hand.

And now let me try to convey an impression of the changing seasons on our old stream at Eagle Hill from

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the opening day in April to those May days, when the barren Cape uplands come to life.

There are at least three things that we go to the Cape streams for nowadays where formerly there was only one, the all-important trout. Now our first fishing day must be in part devoted to the search for arbutus which is at its best from early April to the end of that month. In severe seasons even later than that.

Thirty years ago we started fishing on April 1st and many a rough day have we waded from the 'stave' mill down past Eagle Hill to the 'end of fishing,' our lines perhaps freezing on our reels and the northwest wind whistling across the open pine barrens. But it was always surprising to find how comparatively comfortable the temperature would feel while we were wading in the stream bed sheltered from the worst of the wind. The bright spring sun shining down and glancing off the ripples had such power that toward afternoon we would find our unaccustomed winter-weakened eyes sore and tired. Something of the motion of the stream would be imparted to our tired heads so that we felt quite dizzy and 'heady' by evening.

Life along the stream was not at its best those first days, but the sheer joy of feeling your feet on the stream bottom, of stepping slowly and quietly so as to approach a well-remembered spot without kicking up a bunch of water-weeds, or disturbing the softer sand banks was more than enough excitement, even though trout were scarce. There was the joy of seeing each pool again — they were every one known by name — and searching for minute over-winter changes in their depths or the set of the current under the bank.

Here a once famous trout haunt silted up with too







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much sand and changed into a chub or sucker hole, there a new gravelly run appearing under a maple root where was only sand before, a spot which might rush to sudden fame by holding its first fish. And then the associations of each and every turn of the river; here is 'seven-trout pool' where we stood in our tracks one long-ago day and took as many beauties, one after another. There is 'pounder pool,' a little gravelly spring that a stranger would never think worthy of the trouble of a rather difficult cast to the left and under a maple tree; here 'double-hook run,' where a quarter-pounder swallowed a minnow, ran across stream and took a worm bait, and was then reeled up simultaneously by a surprised pair of anglers, both fast in the same fish.

Yes, the first day was glorious, but the big ones had not arrived and the woods were still silent except for the whistle of newly arrived field sparrows or the welcome of the chickadees. But grouse were feeding along the stream banks in goodly numbers; sufficient to warm the sportsman's heart, and they would burst away in the most tempting fashion, though if you followed this stream in November you were sure to be sadly disappointed. And if it was a warm season and the day fine, the angler might be greeted by the few liquid notes of a Wilson's thrush.

Suppose it is now a little later. We have just recovered from our astonishment at the first startling green along the edge of the Sudbury meadows, where the waters drop and the new sedge is suddenly exposed as a band of blazing green. Never have we seen, never shall see, such vivid green again. Banked up against the faded brown of last year's matted skeletons of grasses it spreads away up-river a dazzling emerald strip following

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the windings of the stream. Each day the barren sprout-clothed hills around Boston are taking on richer, more varied tints, and here and there a single tree matured beyond its fellows stands out a blushing tender kind of green. How goes it now with our little Cape rivers? What changes have these few weeks brought, what luck shall reward our trout-enhungered souls?

This is to all, especially the fisherman, the most intoxicating season of the year. Against the pitch-pine and inkberry woods along the Cape roads the shadbush flowers, the common and the bronzy-leafed kinds, have appeared like magic snow we never quite know whence, so unsuspected their presence a few days before. The white oaks have scarcely changed at all since our last visit and the low shrub oaks are as bare and purple as they were a couple of weeks since.

But the stream is no longer the silent river. It is fairly bursting with the drowsy gurgling sizzle of the parulas, 'chip-er, chip-er-chip-er, chee-ee-ee-ee,' coming from the red-budded swamp maples. The little blue and yellow creatures are flashing back and forth across the stream and now and then one alights within a few feet of the lone fisherman. The males carry on their mimic warfare at a couple of yards from his face and help to make the day eventful. These are among the first of the warblers to arrive in large numbers, and soon they are joined by great flights of redstarts, black-and-white creepers, chestnut-sided and Maryland yellowthroats, that seem to use these sheltered north-pointing valleys as regular migration roads. Nowhere else in Massachusetts have I seen these particular species so concentrated as on certain parts of the Cape streams: so much so, that it used to be a regular habit

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with us, after the day's trouting was over at Eagle Hill, to pole a canoe up-river and float silently down, just watching the hosts of the warbler tribe. Not a great many species would be identified on these paddles, but owing to the yet leafless trees the birds were a far more notable sight than in other places and one got much closer to them than when walking about with a pair of field glasses at home.

The great flight of parulas is largely over by the last week in May, but a goodly number remain to breed, and sometimes in June your face will collide with a tuft of usnea moss hanging over the brook, out of which there will pop a nesting warbler. A peek inside discloses a craftily concealed set of eggs in the interior of one of those gray maple beards.

Cheewinks and catbirds help to make the stream banks lively and under the pitch-pines the needles are torn aside where the industrious 'ground robins' dig their hundreds of little holes. The stream banks may still look dead enough with an array of faded sweet-fern, steeple bush, and wild-rose stems, but they are not all asleep, for there now hangs over the water's edge an occasional cluster of pure white bells, the first flowers of the leather leaf or andromeda. Flowers are not plentiful in these cold-bottomed valleys, so the few violets that grow there are all the more appreciated.

The trout are come now and so are the alewives, and often the latter are so thickly concentrated in a favorite trout hole that we have to wait until they pass in order to fish in peace. Sometimes we foul-hooked one of these nervous fellows when casting for nobler quarry, and a lively run would the silvery little fish make if he was fast in the tail or belly.

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In early May the water was still cold and the trout could be found in the warmer parts of the streams; those places would be deserted later on. Sometimes far upstream, where the brook was mostly pond water and had not yet been joined by many springs, it paid to fish the open, unsheltered riffles out in mid-stream, not for large fish, but for the little seven- and eight-inch beauties that were as fat as butter and as white as a ghost. Although the worm was about as deadly as any lure, a trout fin or a minnow was quite as good, and better for teasing out the larger fish. Flies were all right for the small ones out in mid-stream, but we did little with them in the deep pools or in the holes under the banks, where we had to float a bait very cautiously.

The 'sandy stretch' in Eagle Hill was at its best in early May; a mile-long piece of wide river, well grown up to water weeds later on, but having the most delectable little gravelly-floored pockets here and there under the banks that we had to approach carefully, because the stream slipped along quietly here and it could easily be 'riled' if one stepped in the wrong place. Just such another piece of water was the lower Monument River, a little above the tidewater, but muddier and harder to fish.

'Halfway pool,' 'tin-can pool,' 'the two islands,' and 'the Eagle tree,' what memories do those names unfold! And here it should be recorded that Eagle Hill or Agawam River twenty-five years ago was a veritable resort for these great birds. On a fine morning in May or June when the alewives were well on the run, we could see from the camp door two or three, sometimes as many as five or six huge eagles sitting on the bare branches of a great dead white pine about a quarter of



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a mile up the stream. Directly below their perch the river was wide and shallow and the sand bars were covered with 'herring scales' where the big birds had torn off the silver scales before bolting their breakfast. The place was well chosen, for from it they could watch the schools approaching and when a lot of black-backed herring were stranded on a sand bar they could pounce down and take as many as they wished. But now that alewives have failed to run as they used to on the Agawam, eagles have gone elsewhere, and one of the striking sights of that lovely river has passed forever.

That stream was a good place to see the rare otter, and I suppose I have run across the shy beasts at least eight or ten times in the course of many wanderings with rod and canoe — a good many glimpses for a place only fifty miles from Boston. Once I watched a pair playing and fishing and saw one of them dive and bring up a huge red perch, when both of them swam ashore with it and disappeared in thick brush. A few deer held out in this little wilderness, and in the Falmouth woods when there were none in the rest of eastern Massachusetts; but for some reason or other we seldom saw anything but their tracks.

As you walked downstream in May ugly suckers disturbed in schools from mid-stream, dashed up on both sides, so clumsily that they often hit your boot a resounding whack. The chubs could be approached so closely that one could look right down at the little fellows while wading past, but the trout was a different matter entirely. Every now and then as you made a step forward a darting shadow broke away for the deepest edge of the river and under cover of the bank raced up abreast of you and then behind you upstream. But

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so many vague shadows of flitting warblers were darting back and forth on the golden stream floor that half the time you scarcely knew which were fish and which birds.

Then suddenly as you fished there came a violent pull, perhaps a pinky flash in a dark hole and an angry splash followed by a murmur of line in the ferules, as your five feet of slack ran out. No chub this. There is a sulky pause and a worrying series of sharp tugs. You struck and turned over a pink or silver bar of flesh, all zigzagging dash and animation. Gradually you drew him up so that you could see him clearly, a ghost fish looking scarcely real or solid, poised in this colorless stream. And it was always astonishing to see how the size of fish in those Cape streams was dwarfed. They never, while at the end of the leader, looked nearly as large as they really were, although I remember waters elsewhere that dwarfed the fish instead of magnifying them. So at last when you finally made a neat swoop with the net you were a little surprised to find this ghost fish a solid body, threshing mightily amid the net strands.

May was the best month of all on most of the Cape trout waters. A typical May morning would be cold, often frosty, with perhaps a brisk breeze from the northwest. By the time the sun was up it beat warmly against the door of the camp at Eagle Hill and the newly risen, shivering campers, still half dressed, cast it open to let in the grateful rays, for it was far warmer outside than in. If the water was too cold the trout would do well not to start before eight or nine o'clock and from then until early afternoon he would have all the best of it. Probably by eleven or twelve the wind would have shifted to a brisk southwester, coming up

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the river and making casting difficult, but that was the best time to take trout.

Those were no balmy inland southwesters, but cold bracing sea-winds, ruffling up the whole length of the bay and boreal enough to hold back the vegetation all along its path. But they had desirable features in that they and the cold spring water kept the mosquitoes in check until long after fishing in the brooks around Boston became a near torture. Frosts were and are almost the rule in those valleys well into June, and I well remember an extremely severe one in July, so late that it actually withered the full-grown white oak leaves high up on the larger trees.

Quiet as those days were on the upper Agawam there would come to us in the first days of May the regular fusillades of the shooters in Hog Island Narrows intercepting the White-winged scoters or 'May white wings' as they came north up the bay to fly overland across the Cape. And we sometimes took a hand in this picturesque style of shooting, now almost forgotten.

Let us get back into the stream again, pull up our boots to the limit and look expectantly down its clear windings. We walk along the pinkish-pebbly sub-aqueous paths that wind between great bronzy-green beds of water crowfoot gently waving too and fro in the crystal depths. I think there is no water plant so beautiful as this aquatic buttercup, for such it really is. Late in May there peep out from among its dark leaf masses that look wholly unlike true leaves, little white flower buds which, though small, startle one, they shine so diamond-white against the rich greens. Beside this striking plant growth are the bright scarlet leaf tufts of a rush (*Juncus militaris*) that ornament the sandy or

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gravelly places where the current is not too swift. These patches of intense color remind one of the bright red willow rootlets that are often seen around the edges of ponds near the base of some ancient willow tree.

It would be all too easy to linger indefinitely over the fascinating advances of the Cape spring. Each time we came across the Plymouth barrens, and it used to be pretty often, new wonders were about us. The purple color of the bare shrub oaks changed to a wide-spreading coppery bronze, for these dwarf trees were now in flower and their leaves just unfolding. Even at that stage we notice frost-nipped hollows where there has been almost no change as yet. The larger white oaks shed from their three-inch leaves a tender yellow-green color and a clump of small poplars have a bright silvery sheen by contrast. Little dwarfish cherries are in a burst of white blossom along the roadsides and the pitch-pines with their two or three inches of new growth look yellower than a month ago.

Now if you come with me to the top of Eagle Hill where the old camp still stands, sixty or seventy feet above the stream, and if you look north up-river past the Eagle tree, the wealth of color is simply dazzling. For the maples have spread their scarlet seed-wings and blaze as in the autumn, while some of the new shrub oak leaves are a most amazing carmine or deep purplish magenta. Among these blood-red trees mingle delicate-leaved birches and against it all stand out the larger pines, solemnly black-green along the edge of the river.

It is not my idea to say much about the actual fishing for Cape trout, but to try to create a picture of a typical Cape stream at different seasons of the year, with the shrubs and trees and bird life that were so highly char-



## WARBLERS AND ARBUTUS

acteristic. But as long as we have slipped unaware into the subject of fishing it might be noted that although some Cape streams were almost created for the fly fisherman, with broad shallows open to the sky, and little gravelly holes under either bank, it was seldom that we could get the best fish without bait. Scores of times I have fished with a fly when trout were rising everywhere but have only been able to take an occasional small one, while a rod following close behind with a seductive worm, a minnow, or perhaps a cross-cut section of a 'scaled' herring, would be having remarkable luck.

Of course we could sink our flies with split shot, run them deep under the banks and take a good many medium-sized fish, but that is scarcely fly fishing, and if you have lost caste to that extent you might as well get the satisfaction of knowing that you are armed correctly for the big ones. True, down in the lower tidal waters large trout will in certain places rise well to the fly, yes, almost out into the open salt water, among the waving beds of eel grass, but that is only for a few short weeks in early spring. To prove this I could take you down to Amos's Landing on the Mashpee River and paddle downstream on the low tide, fishing the open places in the eel grass with a fly. It was something of a sensation when first we tried it, to take a beautiful silvery sea-run fish right out of salt water with Poponossett Bay in sight.

It seems quite certain that originally all these Cape trout ran down to brackish creeks after spawning in October, or possibly at times upstream to natural ponds. I am certain this must have been so in such streams as Eagle Hill, Tihonet, and Maple Springs. For

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I have very carefully fished and examined almost with a microscope the whole of Eagle Hill in January and have never seen the slightest evidence of fish life; and during one spring when a certain fish-way was out of commission below Glen Charlie, not one single trout appeared until fish navigation was made possible around the middle of May. But on the other hand, if you placed a few thousand quarter-pound hatchery trout in the stream in late summer or autumn you would find a good many of them there on April 1st the following spring, but what a contrast they made to the beautiful fat silvery native fish. For these strangers were seedy-looking, and black with uncovered ragged gills and a half starved expression. They had not learned to forage or to migrate, and I always felt that most of them had come to grief in some way or another, for we never derived the slightest benefit by stocking a stream like Eagle Hill where the trout were free to go to the sea. This does not mean that the present-day streams, cranberry bogs, reservoirs and what not are not benefited by stocking and screening, — quite the opposite; they can only be maintained by stocking, since the old spawning places are ruined, but it was quite evident that few hatchery trout acquired the migratory habit soon enough to save themselves from a kind of slow starvation.

The upper parts of some Cape streams were naturally almost troutless owing to the warm waters which flowed out of such ponds as Half-Way, Mashpee, Great Herring, and others. And yet before these upper waters grew too warm in May or early June we could often take trout in places where they only lived a short season. It is possible that some trout made their homes deep down around cold springs, even in those pickerel infested

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lakes, for it was well known that along certain stretches of the shore of Mashpee Lake a fair string of fish could sometimes be taken on a fly in March or April by simply wading alongshore in two or three feet of water.

Probably under primitive conditions pickerel were not especially destructive to trout in the cooler, rapid parts of the Cape rivers, but now that their courses are interrupted by dams and flowage, the fresh-water sharks have not only grown more plentiful but seem to have increased in size. The original brook pickerel as I knew them in Eagle Hill thirty years ago were small, harmless fellows not over one-quarter of a pound in weight, usually much less, but the new lake formed by the Glen Charlie dam produced an entirely different type of pickerel that at once began to ruin the trout fishing.

It was always a thing to wonder at, even in the old days, to see the number of trout in that stream that bore marks of having been wounded by pickerel, probably on their way through the Wareham ponds in early spring. Sometimes a complete pickerel tooth pattern was printed on one side of a fresh-caught trout, and you could almost estimate the size of the pickerel that had made this unsuccessful onslaught.

The wonder is that any small trout lived to complete the journey; and I can only suppose that they must have passed up that three-mile battle front either very rapidly or by night, when the sun-loving pickerel was less actively on feed.

And how about size of trout the eager angler will ask? Well, the typical 'salter' was a fish of a pound to one and a quarter pounds. Fish over one and a half were large fish even in the old days. My largest was a trout of three pounds even, taken in the Monument River

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just beside a steam dredger while the Cape Cod Canal was building. There is a record of a fish of three pounds six ounces taken from the Tihonet waters, and rumors of four-pound fish are still to be heard. At Eagle Hill the largest I ever weighed was just two and a quarter, and a fish over one and a half was rare indeed in that stream.

Nearly a hundred years ago when Jerome Smith wrote his natural history of the fishes of Massachusetts, about the same weights for 'salters' are given for these very rivers. Three pounds was considered 'a very large fish' though a fabulous weight of 'nearly five pounds' is mentioned by that not too reliable author.

Now if we wish we will go up the Mashpee River and start in fishing at Asher's path, where generations of trout anglers have passed before us. Marshpee as Smith used to call it. There we would carefully 'scale' a fresh-caught 'herring' and divide it into silvery chunks by making three length-wise cuts and a lot of crosscuts to provide the time-honored lure, in use for a hundred years, and heaven only knows how much longer. I could point out the various shady 'hides' built at the angles of the brook in order to coax the big trout to come up river. With a line about two feet long and a stiff-tipped rod the novitiate could learn the Indian method of teasing out 'salters' by running the bait up and down far under the 'hide' and jerking it up against the current with short rapid strokes. For the larger salters are not often found feeding out in the stream and nearly always lie well under the deepest shade, where you must present the bait absolutely at their noses and in such a way as to wake them up and arouse their appetites. At the same time you must learn to shake off innumerable eight- or nine-inch trout that



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fairly swarm in this brook and are so voracious that you can take them almost between your feet as you stand at the head of a pool.

Not sporty fishing you will say. Perhaps not, but a 'salter' is a wild trout with five times the struggle of a mountain-bred fish; and when you land him, and you often don't, you feel as elated as if you had a salmon.

Such trout are too good to throw into a pan to be frizzled up with a lot of oily-tasting lard or bacon. Take one of three-quarters of a pound weight up to one and one-half pound or so, split him and broil him, and if he is a fresh-run 'salter' you will never want to eat trout 'camp fashion' again. For those fish just up from the sea are as pink and firm of flesh as any salmon, taste as good as a fresh-run grilse and ought to be treated as well in the kitchen. And they are splendid baked 'à la Mashpee' in a pan of deep fat with all 'innards' intact.

And here let me throw in a word of caution. If you want your trout, any trout, to taste as well when you get them home as they did when you cooked them in camp, follow this. It took me ten years to find out this simple fact myself, although a moment's sober thought ought to have sufficed. And here is the point. Never pack your fish in sphagnum moss, tempting and cool as it always looks, unless it is such a hot day that you simply do not dare to put them unprotected into your creel. And what is more, don't carry them home packed in this way. By preference wrap each fish carefully in a piece of clean paper and then surround the lot with cracked ice, using the moss around that if you are going to submit your fish to a long journey.

The fact is that if fresh trout are packed for any length of time in actual contact with moss they will

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acquire a muddy or slightly cellar-like flavor which is very disagreeable to some palates, though others quite as well educated do not seem to notice the difference at all. Some folks take it for granted that trout are good just because they are trout. Hence the idiotic demand for liver-fed hatchery fish that will scarce stand comparison to a sculpin!

But I am wandering more and more from the subject, if indeed I ever had one when I began this paper. It were best not to dwell too long on the advancing season for the sensation, one might almost say the astonishment of the budding time is replaced by a less exciting period. Vegetation comes then to a kind of stasis, mosquitoes swarm about the fisherman and numerous quawks croak and squabble over the spent and drifting alewives. That is a season to fish more than it is to admire, and since this is not so much of fish as fishing places, we will leave the valley until the next April.





VIII  
PAN-FISH FISHING





## VIII

### PAN-FISH FISHING

SOMETIMES in the Maine woods we go after little pan trout, Charlie and I, the kind that boys love to bring home, strung shriveled in a long pathetic row on an alder twig. It's worth while to do this once in a season just to see our moss-grown mountain brook and renew youthful experiences. The afternoon is lowery and calm as we leave the camp and head away up Lobster Lake straight toward Spencer Mountain. Spencer is dark, almost inky colored in his blanket of somber spruce but if you half close your eyes you become aware of a kind of purplish bloom that seems to override the blackness like a film of evanescent fog. As we draw nearer the head of the lake and land on a hard-packed sand beach we lose this purple haze effect, we are too close to the mountain.

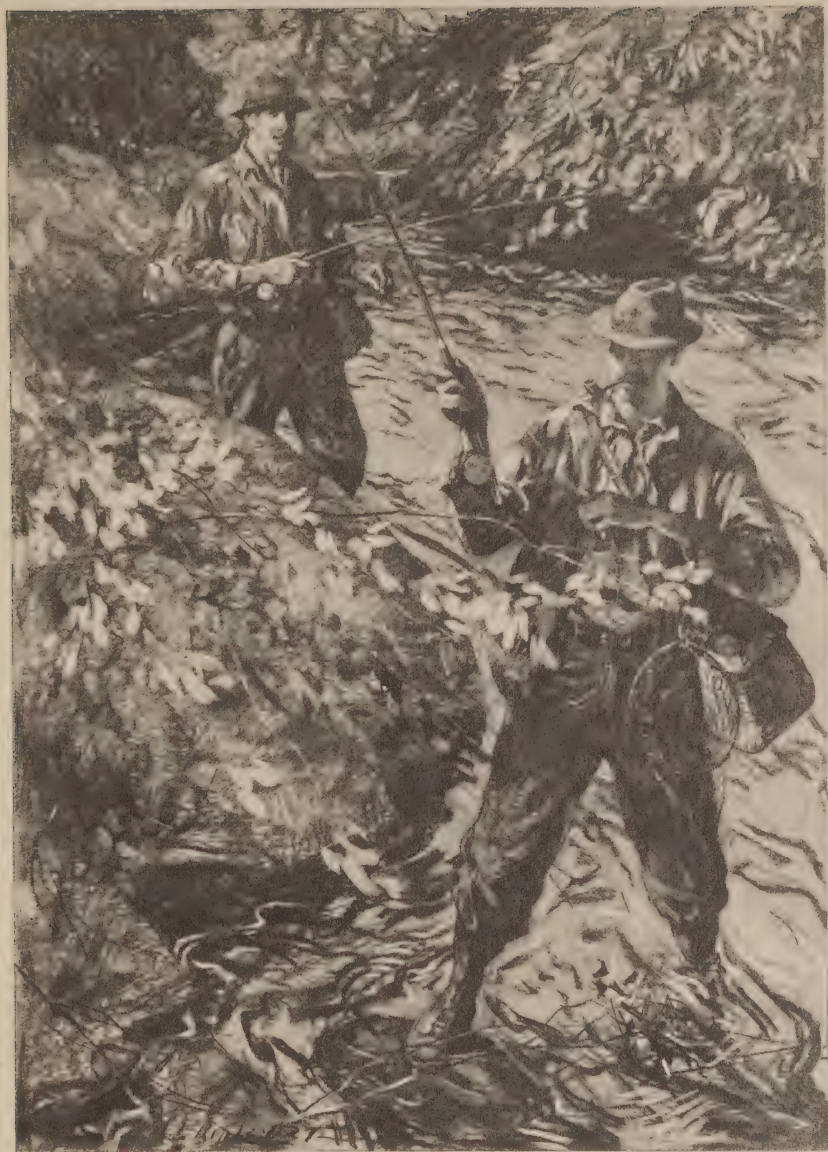
I have often wondered what the outline of Spencer looked like from our northern side. Now I know. He sprawls there, the very shape of a gigantic moose fallen upon his stomach with his hind legs stretched out behind and his hocks mingled with the foothills of Little Spencer. He lacks only a head, which is chopped off at the base of his neck, as if some gigantic man had severed him there for a trophy to grace his megalithic halls. I have traveled along the spinal cord of the Spencer moose for three or four miles and tossed a stone down into the Penobscot waters on the north and the Kennebec on the south side, for he lies at the parting of the ways.

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We gather up our traps. Charlie lingers to cut a ten-foot alder pole since he disdains to use a rod for this kind of meat fishing. We tramp up an old grassy road fairly red with painter's brush and blue along the wet edges with iris, peering into all the muddy places for tracks of game. Moose have come this way not so long before the rain, bear too and now and then a wild-cat. The road is lined with balsam Christmas trees just now giving off a powerful aroma from their rapidly expanding yellowish tips; we knew these trees when they were scarcely knee high.

About a mile and a half up the old tote road we come to the stream and halt to prepare for the business. Charlie's rig has the advantage of simplicity for he merely pulls a bit of line from his pocket, ties it to the end of his pole and puts on a considerable sinker. Then he baits a generous hook with a bit of pork. A sinker is the most important part of the rig, for if you do not get your line immediately to the bottom of the deepest holes you will only get the smallest ones, and the biggest are none too big.

Before we start a thorough greasing becomes necessary, for the flies and mosquitoes are quite as fond of this bit of valley as the trout are, and you cannot balance yourself on the slipperiest of all rocks if you have to fight flies and wield a rod at the same time. But there is one warning which ought not to be left out of account if you would get your fish back to the frying pan in the best possible order. Certain kinds of 'fly grease' have a most penetrating flavor; and as every fishlet has to be handled severely to get him into your sac, he is certain to carry off enough pennyroyal or pine tar to flavor the supper with a sauce which is not appreciated by fastidi-







## PAN-FISH FISHING

ous palates. So it is wise to put on old gloves after you have greased up your face and neck.

I doubt if there ever was a brook that had more trout to the square yard than Blood Pond brook. The temptation always is to drop in anywhere just to see them come for it; but you are out to grade your catch up to an average that will tally with the rules laid down at Augusta, so you pass over the shallow ripples and eddies and hunt the deep holes. These fish are what my friend Henry B. calls 'brave' trout. They scorn the shelter of the banks or log jams and lie right in the middle of the deepest water ready for the first bit of food that floats their way. But they are surrounded by smaller and even more active cousins and brothers so that it is a marvel how they get food enough to grow even to the fair and dainty length of seven inches.

Astonishing, too, it always is to feel the vibratory wiggle imparted to your rod as you draw forth a six-inch fish; and I should like to know how many hundred times that small shape contorts itself in the journey from the pool to your hand. The shorter he is the faster the vibration imparted to your wrist and the more difficult it seems to steer him your way. Perhaps you feel a little compunction after a time in filling your pouch with such helpless and juvenile quarry, so you have to bait your conscience by imagining how much more the ones you leave behind will have to eat to-morrow. There is something in this point of view after all, — enough one would think to calm the most scrupulous zoöphile, more especially if said zoöphile should happen to like pan fish.

You will not fish very long on this brook without sliding off a rock or dropping through a rotten log jam,

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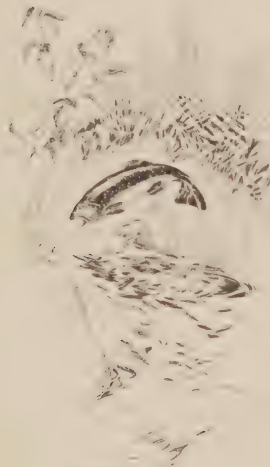
and you are lucky if you do not sprain an ankle or get wet all over. You start with the determination to fish leisurely, enjoy the occasional stately trees and delectable mossy knolls so as to bring back a true picture of the stream banks. But the worst of it is you are so busy picking your way gingerly over the bad places, steering your rod among the branches and trying to keep up to Charlie, who fishes in an effortless way at the rate of about two miles an hour, that you soon give up any such intention.

Finally, all breathless, you catch up to Charlie (who fortunately at the moment is trying to extricate his one hook from a yellow birch limb twenty feet over his head), and you say, 'How many have you got?' and Charlie answers, 'Oh, half a sac full, I guess.' Then he says 'Oh, that ain't nothin'; a few years ago Dave Mulligan sent me and Jed Turner up here to watch a fire over near Lost Lake. I says to Jed, now you just go and watch the fire and I'll catch some trout for supper. So he says all right and away he went. Come along night he come back and we camped in that old log cabin over there, and I had a whole sac full of trout to fry up. Well, I'll be durned if he didn't eat that whole sac of fish hisself. I never see a man eat so many fish at a sitting; and I like to eat a mess myself once in a while. Next day a wind come up, the fire broke out again, and Hell! we might just as well stayed to home, 'cause God Amighty couldn't stop it then.'

During this recital and delay I have a chance to slip by Charlie and strike virgin territory, and then by strenuous effort I keep ahead, casting only into the best spots, and glancing warily over my shoulder to see how fast he is coming along.

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At last it is time that we turn away through the swamp and 'hit' the tote road, and after several attempts to make the 'just one more cast' I manage to tear myself away from the fascination of the brook. Charlie has already cast away the alder switch and vanished in the brush, and shortly I follow, giving a mild halloo until I find him leaning against a spruce tree. We join up then and make it back to Lobster in long strides, to find that a windy evening has settled on the great lake. We have a pounding voyage to camp, but thanks to our twenty-one foot canoe we make the trip comfortably. Then all hands eat trout for two days at least.









## IX

### GREENLAND'S ICY MOUNTAINS



## IX

### GREENLAND'S ICY MOUNTAINS

GREENLAND! The name instinctively makes us shiver, yet its west coast is a green land in summer, gay with great beds of arctic flowers that you can see for miles offshore, and lush with most wonderful blueberries. After you have come from a desolate place like Hudson Straits and Cumberland Gulf, as we did in the summer of 1896, it has a really tropical look.

Our little expedition, consisting of the two professors, the medical student, the Government Geodetic Survey man, Porter and myself, landed from the ship at Umanak, a small native settlement presided over by a Danish Governor or government trade agent. If you look on your map, you will see more than halfway up the west coast a large island which is Disco Island, and just north of that is the peninsula called Nugsuak, perhaps a hundred miles long. We had been exploring the magnificent fiords on the north side of that peninsula, and especially the huge Karajak glacier, where the geologists had measured the rate of ice flow. They were interested to discover a veritable 'back-water' where the ice had actually moved a couple of feet upstream in the thirteen days that we were there, just as water turns around in the eddies of a river. While the scientists were cruising about on the inland ice-sheet which at this point came down within a few miles of our camp, the medical student and I had been off ourselves in a small 'jolly boat' with a couple of Eskimos for companions. One dash up a valley we made for deer, but nothing

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came to view except some old tracks. Now Porter and I were most anxious to get a Greenland reindeer and finally at a council of war toward the end of August the chief of our party gave the necessary permission. The next day all hands left the glacier camp and started toward the Ekaluit River in our big native skin boat, the oomiak, with native ladies at the oars and several kyaks following with the husbands and fathers of the women. Three of us rowed, or sailed if the wind served, in a little wooden boat we had brought from Cape Breton. Occasionally we in the boat would press the oomiak into a race, but as a rule the Eskimos were not over-enthusiastic about long-distance rowing.

That night we were forced to spend at Ikarasak on account of staving a hole in the oomiak, and as the Governor was rather short of food he and I went out after sunset to get some meat for breakfast. We were rowed out a short distance from the village by five or six natives in a whale-boat. The sun had set behind the great cliffs and a flight of kittiwake gulls was making up the fiord. The poor birds were lured up to the boat by waving old gull wings and by vigorous whistling, which brought them nearly every time straight over us. The Governor had an old pin-fire gun which he used well, and in a short time we got thirty or more. Made into little meat balls, called 'tartarak,' and fried in seal grease we thought them most delicious; for some reason they did not taste fishy at all.

Next day we were wind-bound and had to pass the time in social affairs, attending Eskimo dances and drinking ceremonial cups of coffee. I remember that among those little people my height was considered remarkable, and the Governor insisted on standing me



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up against the wall to compare me with other lesser giants of the neighborhood.

The afternoon of the following day the wind dropped, but as the Strait was full of ice we had to portage our boats and goods overland a short distance before we could get afloat. The same afternoon we reached our destination.

The Ekaluit River, the base selected for our deer hunt, was a favorite trout stream and the Eskimo fished its mouth with their nets. More delicious fish than those northern trout I never tasted, and some of them reached five or six pounds' weight. Our attempts to take them on a fly were, however, a complete failure.

Next morning in bright and lovely weather Porter and I got early away. We took nothing except our rifles, a light seal-skin suit, and extra socks. Our feet were (we soon found most improperly) encased in the regular Eskimo seal-skin boots or kamiks, which were supposed to be essential because they made no noise against the rocks. But more of that later. Toué and Jonathan were our pilots, cheerful little dark-skinned fellows showing an admixture of Danish blood as all these West Greenlanders do. Our rations were simple and light, rather too much so we discovered at the end of about three days. They consisted of a few pieces of hard, black, Danish bread, the same which the Government supplied to the natives, but we found it very decent and liked it better than our own ship-biscuit. Then we had two cans of baked beans, a can of corned beef, and some coffee. An empty bean can served to make coffee in, so we took no cooking pots at all.

We, by this time, had learned a few Eskimo words and had worked out others by means of a Danish-Eskimo

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dictionary, for English of course is a totally unknown tongue on those northern shores. Conversation was a good deal a matter of signs and pantomime, a method for which those natives have a real talent.

During the morning we worked up the Ekaluit valley over rather good going for about eight miles, stopping a few times to look for deer with an ancient telescope which was borrowed for the occasion. Then we struck up a steep notch through the mountains on our right and, after a struggle, reached a pass where the going was better. Here great flat blocks of gneiss served as good stepping stones and there were little lakes, too, and patches of snow. We had lunch and then kept on through the pass to where we could see down over great cliffs into a new country, a great valley framed by an ice-capped wall, and along its bottom a beautiful lake called Tussek-Suak. But that which most held our astonished gaze was not the lake nor the lovely red and green barrens which sloped up from it, but ten enormous glaciers that thrust themselves down the opposite slopes at almost equal distances apart. Some ended before they reached the lake, but others had pushed out their terminal moraines almost into the lake itself. That was a scene I never shall forget, more impressive because of the knowledge that few if any white men had seen it. It comes as clearly to my 'inward eye' now as it ever did, even after an interval of thirty years.

When we at last reached good going in the lower valley, we were quite worn out, our feet so sore from the unaccustomed foot-gear that we sighed, but all too late, for our good stout hob-nailed boots. It was so warm we were soaked through with perspiration. A rest on the soft moss and a perfect gorge upon the most luscious

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blueberries we had ever seen, somewhat restored us, for we could lie in one spot and pick all the fruit we could eat. Meanwhile, Toué and Jonathan peeked through their old ship telescope at the barrens across the lake. The rest of the day we walked west along the north shore of the lake growling a good deal about our poor feet and wondering when we were going to stop. We crossed one terribly rough moraine, and that last little piece of a Danish mile which Toué checked off on his fore-finger in response to our ever more frequent inquiries, was a long time in being covered. At last, about six o'clock, we saw in the distance an enormous flat rock which was pointed out as the end of that day's journey. To say we were grateful would hardly express our feelings. I remember that an old sprain in my heel had broken out again, which added to my distress.

We soon made ourselves comfortable under our rock shelter, by arranging sundry stones to suit our anatomy, and we found that our house was dry, although not entirely free from draughts. Cooking was a simple affair in good weather, as it was that first night, but we tried it later, after it had been raining for hours, and we found something to test our ingenuity, for there is of course no wood in the Nugsuak Peninsula, only little shrubs and moss. These Greenlanders, before they made coffee, would roast the beans on a slab of stone until they had them burned black. Then they would boil them for a long time until a strong inky-looking mixture was ready for our receptive stomachs. It was good, too.

Before the light faded, Toué, who had been spying the opposite shore, suddenly exclaimed, 'Tuk tuk.' He had discovered a deer lying asleep at the end of a talus slope at least two miles away. Neither Porter nor I could

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make it out, not even after Toué had fixed the telescope solidly among the rocks with the mystic reindeer in the middle of the field. But we were much encouraged and turned in, to sleep more comfortably than we had expected.

It was a fine morning when we crawled out from under the rock, and we felt rested except for our feet. The deer had moved away, but a third of a mile off on the lush green moss two enormous snow-white arctic hares were playing about, unaware of the strange white men that squinted at them through a glass. What a picture they made: arctic summer at its best. We let them alone of course, as we did the occasional ptarmigan that we saw, for we were bent on deer and could not afford to disturb the ground with the roar of our 45-caliber Winchesters.

Walking was perfect torture that second day, and we had to stop and rest when barely two miles were covered, but we got better as the day wore on. As we sat on a big stone, wondering how far we could navigate, the tireless Toué made out two more deer, these also on the wrong side of the lake. One of them he announced was our friend of the past evening. It was a long time before Porter or I could pick out this beast with our unaccustomed eyes, but once we had got the picture, it was easy enough. He looked almost pure white at that distance, and we could just see his horns as the sun now and then glinted on them. But it was a two-day tramp to get to those deer, as we had to go down one side of the lake, cross a stream, and come up on the far side. On this day we crossed a broad glacial flat and walked around the high terminal moraine of a huge ice river that very nearly cut into the lake on our side. We



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stopped for the night among large rocks in a cold, dreary-looking glen some three hundred feet above the level of the lake. There was no place to stay out a rain-storm and the weather looked threatening. We had eaten more than we expected to, and our rations were getting low, just five and a half pieces of bread a day for each of us for the remainder of the trip.

During the night it rained, a cold nasty drizzle, and about half-past three a pretty chilly quartette turned out and made some coffee. That, and a little exercise stamping about, put us right again and we scattered among the rocks and slept until after six.

Awakened by the now magical word 'tuk tuk,' we jumped up to see the telescope aimed at the further shore, but the lake was much narrower here and these deer were not far off. One was an old doe with very large horns, the other a fawn, dark-colored, and hard to see against the moss. They were both feeding in a leisurely way, and as it was only about four miles' walk to them around the foot of the lake, we tightened our belts and started off in the best of spirits. Crossing another large sandy plain, we were further encouraged to find the fresh tracks of a good many animals. Near the foot of the lake we took a last look at our deer, and then hastened on to the stream which flows out of Tussek-Suak into another even larger lake, anticipating no trouble and keener than ever, since our stomachs besides our hunting instincts were urging us to get some meat. What was our surprise, then, to look down upon a roaring glacial-tinted torrent a quarter of a mile across. Toué was puzzled, announced that the prospect was 'aryapoch' (bad), and hesitated which way to turn. But we rolled our trousers up and started in, the icy

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water washing above our knees, the men feeling for bottom with the sticks they carried. Now an ordinary stream of this size would not have been a serious obstacle, but in this one the muddy water prevented us from estimating the depth and covered up deep holes and the smoothest, shiniest boulders, besides treacherous quicksands. We waded up and down that blessed stream for five hours, the water constantly rising, and a cold rain, almost a sleet, falling upon us. Several times we got nearly across and then had to turn back. It was much worse for Toué and Jonathan than it was for us Yankees. In fact, Porter managed to get over all right, but, left alone with the Eskimos, I found that the water was really too much for them. They were too short to stand up in the stream and of course they could not swim a stroke; no natives can. Finally, they lost heart entirely and, turning round, plodded stolidly up the bank. It is easy at this distant time and place, brother sportsman, to call us quitters, but we were very young and inexperienced travelers in a strange country, out of which I doubt if we could have found our way alone. Besides, our food was about gone and we were pretty well chilled through. Shouting to each other across the roaring of the stream proved a useless waste of breath, for neither could hear the other. So Porter came back, and having exhausted both threats and persuasion on our small companions, we now tried bribing, with exactly similar results. Then happening to look up, we saw a great stag, already with our wind in his nostrils, bounding away down the valley, already a half dozen rifle shots off.

We retreated to our bivouac of the night before. Jonathan was very cold; indeed the little man was

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trembling from head to foot and his knees had almost given out in the icy water. Neither Porter nor I was actually shaking, and it surprised us then and afterwards to find that these Greenlanders could not stand being continuously cold and wet any better than we could.

The rain still continued, we were soaked through of course, and we had the greatest trouble to start a fire, even the tiny flame necessary to boil with. It meant searching out every half-dry crack among the rocks and pulling out a little moss here and there, and while the rest of us hunted fuel, one was prone on his stomach continually blowing at the feeble flame. It was a good deal like trying to cook with a wet newspaper instead of dry wood. But at last the coffee was brewed and never did a hot drink bring any greater cheer into our lives than that muddy mixture boiled up in the empty bean can.

That evening I picked up the telescope and before I'd covered three or four fields my eye fell on those two deer calmly feeding, just where we'd seen them last; and before we turned in Toué said that if, in the morning, the weather was good, the water lower, and the deer in sight, he would cross; and thus closed as discouraging a day as often comes to a hunter.

The night was not a comforting one, and we were up, on and off, stamping about to keep the circulation going. No fire could we start, and you can imagine how glad we were when early in the morning the sun came out for a couple of hours. After a time like that, who would hesitate to *worship* that dispenser of universal cheer. The streams, however, were more swollen than ever, and the deer had vanished, so there was nothing to do but make a short cut for camp, because our rations

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were all but finished. So we set out, Toué as usual leading, and the rain falling again as heartlessly as ever. No one can imagine the difficulty in walking over these barrens when they are wet, for then the moss, saturated, and full of deep pits, lets you in up to your knees. So we squelched cheerlessly along and had almost reached the broad sand plain at the foot of the first glacier, when Toué fell flat with an excited whisper and pointed toward the edge of the sand, where among the boulders three quarters of a mile away appeared two deer. Now, I say three quarters of a mile, but goodness knows how far they really were, for this is the most amazing country in the world to deceive the eye in regard to distance. We had that same summer rowed half an afternoon to reach an island whose soaring black cliffs looked but a couple of rifle shots away, and inland it was just as bad, for there was no familiar object to serve as an unconscious measuring stick to guide the eye. An animal the size of a deer will recede to a bounding speck and then vanish utterly in a plain which does not look more than a few hundred yards across. Of course after a time the traveler makes allowance for these optical enigmas, but we had not learned to do more than mistrust our own vision. And so it came about that after we had made a running, crouching stalk, taking advantage of the moments when the deer seemed to have their heads turned, we got as near to one of them as we seemed likely to, with the wind serving us exactly wrong. Guessing the distance at around four hundred yards, we started to shoot, and at the report three other deer appeared on the plain from nowhere, and went scampering away through mud and water, three black dots on the yellow sand. The deer we shot at became perfectly bewildered







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and ran back and forth, we attempting vainly to cut him off either at the glacier or at the lake shore, but we were so winded with our long run that I suppose we did not come anywhere near our target. In spite of all we could do, our long-sought quarry bolted back down the valley along the edge of the cliffs. So our last chance to get a really worth-while trophy was gone.

Very much sobered by such a run of bad luck, we rounded the glacier and climbed straight up into a steep notch in the mountain wall. Perhaps about halfway up, say two thousand feet above the lake, we came on a damp and most forlorn-looking cave, occupied in other days by Eskimo hunters. The rain fell harder and harder, and a cold wind blew up the pass, but Toué said we must wait there until the fog lifted so that we could find our way across the ice-cap above us. We began to suffer a good deal from cold, wet, and hunger, and in spite of heroic efforts we could not sleep them off. About four o'clock in the afternoon we awoke from a fitful nap and decided between us that we would be just as well off walking about all night on the ice-cap as slowly perishing in a wet cave. We called up Toué and told him what we thought, and luckily he agreed with us. The four of us were trembling and shaking all over, and as the rain slackened a bit, we tackled the remainder of the climb vigorously, glad of anything so long as we could get warm again. The pass was steep and choked with easily moved rocks of all sizes, the wet lichens on their surfaces making them as slippery as ice. Both hands and feet were put to use, and we were soon warm enough. We made the summit without a halt, and looked back through a break in the fog on a most impressive scene, but a scene we could not stop to admire.

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Once on the heights the going was better, over small round boulders or big flat slabs of gneiss. We went around one large upland lake and soon after got onto the ice, a cold wind laden with occasional snow-squalls blowing behind us. The men looked worried as the fog closed in thicker than ever. Night too was almost upon us. Depending apparently on the wind as a guide, they set off at a terrible gait in order to make the far side before it was pitch dark, for by this time at the end of August the nights were beginning to get long. The riven ice gradually changed to soft snow over which the walking was fairly good, and we did not halt once until we reached rock on the other side. In that walk of four or five miles we had a beautiful example of all the changes between inland snow fields and marginal glaciers with the different sorts of ice, just as if we had crossed a miniature Greenland from coast to coast.

White with frost from the freezing fog, but greatly relieved, we began to think our troubles about over and that soon we would look down upon the smooth Eka-luit valley, but we were far from a correct reckoning. All the rest of that night we wandered over ice-coated rocks and bare ridges or glaciers as smooth as glass, pitched at most uncomfortable angles upon which we slid and fell continually, our by this time unpopular moccasins offering no hold at all. We struggled up fearfully steep moraines and slid or tumbled down their far sides, until we crumpled up in a most exhausted state a little before midnight. Toué assured us that our camp was now only two miles' easy walk, but we found it seven or eight miles of by far the worst going we had had yet. The short halt stiffened us, our knees had long ago given out, and we crawled rather than walked. But



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why linger on this painful spectacle? Just such another night I remember once in the Rockies of Montana, when for hours and hours my guide and I struggled and fought through a slide of talus block and snow-downed alder bushes with our camp fire blinking below us. But most of us have known nights in the mountains when we became so exhausted that we felt it impossible to make another effort, and yet we usually managed to reach shelter, and soon forgot the nightmare hours, just as a frightful bout of sea-sickness vanishes from the mind. And so we struggled in about daylight and after a few hours' sleep were none the worse for our first and only hunt after Greenland reindeer.







X

SHALL WE CALL A MOOSE?





## X

### SHALL WE CALL A MOOSE?

I COMPOSED myself to write something about moose-calling, to restore the pictures of it that have survived longest in memory and then the subject of sporting ethics came to the surface so that I must say something on that score too. Now there is a great amount of purest bunk written on this question of what a sportsman should and what he should not do, and more of it is poured out in conversations that are far from genuine but sound sweet and glorious to the ear of the partially initiated. I don't believe any of us ever hunted a week without violating every precept of this highly artificial code we talk about so glibly. After all the whole question of what is right and proper is a mixture of comparative values, personal preference and hoary tradition, not much more than that. One says he will not shoot a duck upon the water and of course he doesn't have to if he so decrees. But at the same time I should like to see him crawl unheard up to a little duck infested pond hole that I know in the woods. I should like to see him accomplish this feat successfully as I have seen it done and then have him tell me this was not good sport; take those old black ducks (all black ducks are aged) sitting, flying or any other way that he can get them into his coat pocket.

Another one pipes up and says a ruffed grouse should never be shot sitting, a noble sentiment that will scarcely bear analysis. I have tried my hardest to shoot grouse on the ground or in trees in my part of the world

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for fifteen years and I can recall just two occasions when I happily succeeded in connecting with a bird before he flew, and so violating the code. And on both these occasions I felt more solid satisfaction than if I had gotten a bird in the ordinary way. Why? because it was a far more difficult feat with grouse as wary as they are in this particular region. Now in the north woods we feel most woefully underhanded if we use a twelve-gauge gun on a walking grouse, but take a pistol and you can have a most satisfactory time and give the running, clucking birds a good chance. I shall never forget the sport we had with the willow grouse, in Newfoundland, hunting them with a pistol on the open, wind-swept barrens, for they had a way of making short flights and hopping up on a rock at 25 or 30 yards so as to give you a most tempting target for a small arm. And the wind would blow your arm about so that you despaired of ever making a hit.

To go back to ducks. I've shot them in various ways but certainly to my mind in no more sportsmanlike manner than when I used to scull with a notorious market hunter through the moonlit ice cakes on the Ipswich and Rowley marshes in midwinter, and we shot them sitting if we could, brother, and flying if we couldn't, and little enough we got for our pains and our shivers. It rather makes me smile to hear the purist scoff at the pot-hunting methods of our duck blinds in Massachusetts, where in a whole season we may by patient waiting be lucky enough to shoot as many ducks as he would kill at a baited blind in Currituck in a week or even in a day. So too our American sportsmen hold up their hands in well assembled horror when they think of the English punt guns and the occasional great shots

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that are made with them. If they would only read old Hawker's diary and place themselves with him in his seaside cottage at Keyhaven, they would really feel ashamed to shoot ducks at a well-regulated duck club, where neither weather-wise lore nor hardihood is necessary to kill the limit; only an easily acquired facility in loading and pointing the weapon and a willingness to sign an annual fat check. And this is not to sniff at the only way in which most busy and albeit well-to-do persons can get some shooting. The truth of the matter is that methods are worked out to suit geographical conditions, and it makes very little difference to a duck whether he is shot sitting or flying, caught in a muskrat trap or a gill net or poisoned in the alkali flats of Bear River.

That sensitive and sharp-eyed person who will never, oh never shoot with a bore larger than 28 has no particular occasion to elevate himself into a cloistered niche just because he is satisfying his own peculiar whimsy. He would doubtless find it still more sportsmanlike, if he really wants to get back to nature, to hunt with a Wambutu pigmy bow and poisoned arrows or a high-grade bean blower.

So with moose-hunting. Doubtless calling bulls in the rutting season is the least sportsmanlike method of all. Also it is the least likely to produce a record head, but I love it for all that. I love it because it brings you closest to nature at the most enchanting time of year and at the loveliest moments, the somber close of perfect autumn days. The frost is in the air, you can hear for miles the most trivial noises and you carry back memories that will last you to old age.

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Looking back we forget pretty much the moose that came or the moose that wouldn't come and even more the moose that wasn't there to come, and all those more or less annoying incidents that loomed large at the time, and we can see at last a kind of composite picture, softened and mellowed by time, with only nature's truer high lights remaining. Can you recall a picture or two with me?

We are on a New Brunswick lake. It is hot and the flies are out. We have an early supper. Now as the wind begins to go down we get away in the canoe. Paddling carefully down to near the head of the lake we beach the stem of the little boat and leave the bow pointing out. Jim steps ashore, bark horn in hand. Gradually it grows stiller and then the breeze fades out entirely, leaving a faint rippling swell, just enough to make a rhythmical squeak as the canoe rubs against some dry white-cedar branches. A flock of mergansers twist by and alight close to us, and a few clucks from me start them swimming our way, but they soon see the canoe and are hastily off.

Now it has become absolutely calm and begins to get dark rapidly. There is a last mournful call from a white-throat, lifeless and short, and a jay gives a few calls. Ever it grows stiller. Almost the last bird noises we hear are a few stray chirps from a robin going home to roost. A squirrel gives a faint chatter. Then last of all a few peeps from a plaintive little sand piper up in the bog. Not a thing has stirred except a kingfisher which twice whizzes by us, once startlingly close. A small trout occasionally splashes faintly near the shore, but it is so quiet now that we can plainly hear our own hearts







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thumping loudly. We have called twice already, getting a splendid echo from the steep hill across the lake, that hill so black, and skyline ragged from an occasional cluster of fine old primeval pines.

Then Jim steps into the canoe and we steal across to the bog and grate our bows on the mud. A small misty moon hangs low in the west, shedding but a dim light on the lonely lake. The sky is slightly overcast now. Suddenly, ghost-like, a great shapeless mass sails swiftly by us followed by its trailing legs, nearly frightening to death a young muskrat that splashes frantically as the great shadow bird passes over him. The Old Blue-heron, for such he is, wheels on stately wing and coming straight back at us furls his sails with a couple of mighty flaps and alights with a plump in the water close by.

Now, if possible, a greater hush than ever falls upon the lake and it is fast getting colder. An owl gives a couple of horrid screams in the far distance and once some unknown bird, evidently awakened from a first sleep, emits a frightened little call.

It gets so dark we can just see for perhaps a short rifle-shot. Once or twice already we think we can hear an animal wading in a distant beaver pond; there was certainly a faint, continuous sound, but it might have been water trickling through a gap in the beaver dam itself.

Now at last we decide to give it up for the night and Jim starts to back us out of the swamp. The noise of the hard-driven paddle is startlingly loud and seems a sacrilege to the hush of the night, for we still speak in whispers, more from habit than anything else. We realize at last how cold we are and on the way back a

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night breeze comes up in our faces. Even now, low down under the notch of a black-looming hill the last streak of day is still visible, making the hills on either side cut the sky unaccountably sharp. We land and stretch ourselves stiffly, a relief after the cramped canoe postures. One more blank night, but we shall soon forget the blankness.

It is afternoon on a meadow, a famous moose haunt. As we leave the camp the evening has come off absolutely still and clear and as yet rather warm. We walk to a little knoll overlooking the upper or north end of the big meadow. As we take our stand on the slope of this knoll a lazy swarm of black flies gathers around us, the first we have seen all day. They had better make the best of it, for their brief holiday is almost over. Our knoll is open country covered with sheep laurel, alder, poplar and small spruce, with a sprinkling of Jack pine, underlain with great rotten logs, a sad reminder of the fire of nearly one hundred years ago. The quiet meadow itself is beautifully fringed with feathery tamaraks, and across on the far side is a belt of black spruce, very thick and overtopped by fine old pines. Back of all this, gorgeous hills sweep up, a perfect blaze of golden-yellow birch, splashed with little blood-red maples and with long ranks of bluish-green poplars scarcely changed yet by the frost. The tops of the hills are mainly bare from old burns. At the head of the meadow a small stream trickles over a little beaver dam.

As the sun gets lower a sudden chill comes down over us, and in a few moments the last black fly has vanished. It is very still, yet a glance at the tops of the small poplars shows their leaves gently trembling. When I



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light my pipe a down-hill draft blows the smoke quite rapidly below me, keeping it close to the ground. And we can feel this evening draft on the back of our necks. It must be the closing down of a cooler strata of air. Although it is so still the trickling sound of water at the beaver dam almost dies out, but again it is borne to our ears by a change of air until it sounds as loud as a waterfall.

Four or five times a whitethroat sings very timidly and sweetly, the last effort long after sunset. Chipping sparrows chirp at intervals and just before dark a small flight of restless warblers goes hurrying by with faint confused twitterings. What are all the inhabitants of the wilderness about at this hushed moment, for only once a squirrel chatters and a sap-sucker taps one round. How wonderfully clear is the atmosphere now with the distant hills as hard and sharp as the near ones. We call four times but get no answer.

### MORNING

I get up at half past five and wake up Fred. That was years ago; I wouldn't do it now. The glass has sunk to twenty-five degrees and there is good ice on the water bucket, the coldest morning of the season. Soon after we get started for our post on the meadow. And now I realize that the alder and willow leaves along the dark path are frozen so stiff that they rattle against us as we pass and the ground is hard and noisy with a white frost covering everything. The bog lies there mysterious, snow-white and a great cotton-white layer of mist hangs across the base of the hills, the pines and spruce silhouetted blackly against it. Before it is fairly light a whitethroat gives a faint call and a screech owl whin-

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nies a little. Then of a sudden bird life wakes up, squirrels occasionally chatter and far away a pine cone falls with almost an alarming thud. The air is stiller even than last night and the poplar leaves are fixed; perhaps because they are frosted. The same down-hill draft persists. Then suddenly the cotton-like cloud of mist tears apart and begins to rise uphill, but even as it starts to move a great bank of thick fog comes down the valley from the north and passes across the base of the hills until only their tops are visible. Again the scene changes and next the hills are blotted out completely and we seem to be looking across a great flat muskeg region. Nature, which was nearly awake a few moments ago, suddenly becomes hushed again, hushed by the intense damp cold that has fallen about us. We stand in the bog and call several times. We can just hear some large animal treading about in the far distance, but we can see nothing. At seven, with sharpened appetites we retreat to camp.

Reader, maybe you have sat with your rifle across your knees and enjoyed nights and mornings like these. Maybe at last after days of patience you hear afar up on that black mountain-side the clacking sound of a bull's antlers and you imagine him sniffing the air and gazing down into the lake where you are crouching. And perhaps he comes a little way and stops just short of the beach. And maybe without a moment's warning or the cracking of a branch out rushes a two-year-old, impetuous for a mate. Once in Quebec my canoe was fairly charged by a couple of angry bulls. Only the most vigorous back-thrusting of our paddles prevented the furious animals from crowding us overboard. I can never forget that night, for it sent a thrill

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through me not to be matched I believe by all the growls of Africa. In the faint moonlight those bulls looked fifteen feet tall.

And no doubt you have seen the lake mist turn a rosy-pink when the sun first touches it from over the pointed spruces and the loon laughs from sheer gladness as she feels the warm beams. And so the hunting of moose with a birch-bark horn well deserves a place for those who love to 'lie alone and hear the wild-goose cry.' Try it if only to absorb to repletion point the hush of the timeless wilderness.









XI  
CURRITUCK MEMORIES



## XI

### CURRITUCK MEMORIES

At the Pennsylvania Railroad Station the south-bound sportsman, even as he alights from his taxi, becomes at once a marked man. The dark-skinned porters, gray-clad and alert, swoop down upon him with avaricious intent and whisk his luggage skillfully away far out of sight. Indeed, the last time it took us a good ten minutes to find it again. If he looks prosperous, the would-be duck-seeker is decoyed to a special wicket which presently is opened with much solemnity by an official with a key. Thus, with unsought parade, is the victim wafted to his waiting train, down a specially opened back stairway. But let him not hope to propitiate these New York Congolese by any paltry quarters or loose change. He must dig deeper or steel himself to an icy glance more frigid than a 'norther' on Hatteras Beach. But having dismissed these vulturine attendants, he is off for Cape Charles on what used to be about the roughest and most sleepless night journey in all America. It is smoother, though, to-day.

Tousled and sleepy he is next morning thrown out upon a cold pier facing the Chesapeake, long before the first streak of day, and amid some confusion he stumbles up the gang plank onto the Norfolk boat. If at this early hour his stomach does not demand immediate attention, he may go on deck.

A tardy winter dawn, dark and lowering, spreads across the bay, as the boat churns away toward Norfolk. Bitterly cold it may be, but inside there is a much too

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sweltering atmosphere, half negroid, half leaky radiators. And so he stays awhile on deck, eager to catch a glimpse of the little bands of scoters and old-squaws that flutter up-wind across the bows, first of the many thousands of wild-fowl he will soon be among. And now the talk is all of weather and ducks, the latest news from the Back-Bay, from Currituck, and distant Pamlico. How the 'Comet' was frozen in, the great bags of geese and swans, and that ever fertile bay-man's topic, the state of the wind-blown tides.

Oh, visions of an ill-spent youth, how rosy are your hues to-night! Back go my thoughts for thirty years, when you and I, old friend, first saw the far coasts of the Carolinas. Deaf and blinking old Bill Brumsey, our host, with his numerous progeny and his rickety home. How he could turn out a duck! Right and properly he did it, with the fat just burned enough and the red juice welling up as you pronged the breast to get a firmer hold. And our first Lynnhaven oysters! We would gulp them down until, seized by a violent chill, we took refuge before the fire to warm up before the ducks came on. Even now I can see the foot-wide open space under the front door where betimes a razor-back, more curious than his brethren, would get a snouthold and with a mighty shove burst open all before him and come lolloping into the parlor. And do you remember that harrowful day when Bill decided his dog was a 'good-for-nothin' cur,' rushed off in a fit of anger, fetched out a rusty gun, and, standing on the piazza surrounded by his distressed and wailing family, let go both barrels and a volley of curses, with no particular effect except to make the object of his attention somewhat wary for the remainder of the morning.



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Then remember the night when news of the decease of an ancient gold-encrusted relative reached us, and you decided but all too soon that we ought to celebrate. And celebrate we certainly did, punctuating our conviviality indoors with frequent trips to the veranda where amid mighty shouts we exploded a round of shotgun shells into the darkness.



I fear we were a long way, those days, from any developed consciousness of sporting ethics, and our chief pride was to see how many laws we could break at one and the same moment. Was it six or seven? I don't remember now, but we worked it out something like this. If we could poach outside Bill's boundaries, on a rest day, after dark, and perhaps without a license, that made, we figured, at least four breaks at once. Then we were perfectly happy.

The first of our many Christmas trips they furnished us with two boatmen, but we soon tired of them and never had any such again. We felt much better breaking laws alone than in company! Recall the freezing nights we 'lay out,' when only that air-hole in the big

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creek stayed open and we stuck up little haycocks of thatch grass along the edge of the ice to serve as goose decoys. Do you remember that westerly gale on the full of the moon when we shot at that hole half the night, the ducks and geese flaring right into our faces and the guns blazing sparks out into the darkness? It was 'mark up the creek,' a dark shadow hovering, a 'bang, bang,' and, like as not, a badly frightened duck twisting up out of sight into the steely-black sky.

Do you remember 'old Harry,' the long-haired beach pony, our faithful ally on many a long day hunt 'down south'? With 'old Harry,' too, we used to maneuver the big snow geese that lived in their thousands along the sand dunes. We would dig a good deep pit in a spot where they had been 'using,' and place around it a dozen or two newspapers stretched over small piles of sand and weighted down at the corners with more sand to keep them from blowing away. A stick wrapped around with paper made a good neck and head, and we stuck these up at one end of each newspaper body. Astonishing the effect, for at a hundred yards we ourselves could hardly tell the transplanted Norfolk Heralds from live snow geese. We took it turn about; first one of us in the pit with two guns and the other on old Harry, driving the geese up and down the sand hills. No shyer bird exists than the big white 'wavies' of Currituck, and the best we ever did in one day was eight or ten; most times it was one or two or none at all. But it was most exciting. As you sat in your pit, you could watch half a thousand birds get up, fly a little way, and alight still nearer. Then up they would get again, as your partner worked around them, and finally with a noise absolutely deafening a whole army came up on







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low-hung wing, a mighty host, their bodies glistening snow-white, their wings ebon black against the yellow sand. Then it meant quick work, for 'wavies' do not pack, and you never could get more than one with each barrel. It took a steady shot to pick the right ones in all that avalanche of cackling fowl. Often, after the battle was over, there was not a feather to show for hours of waiting and watching, for we were not 'deadly shooters' and had a lot to learn.

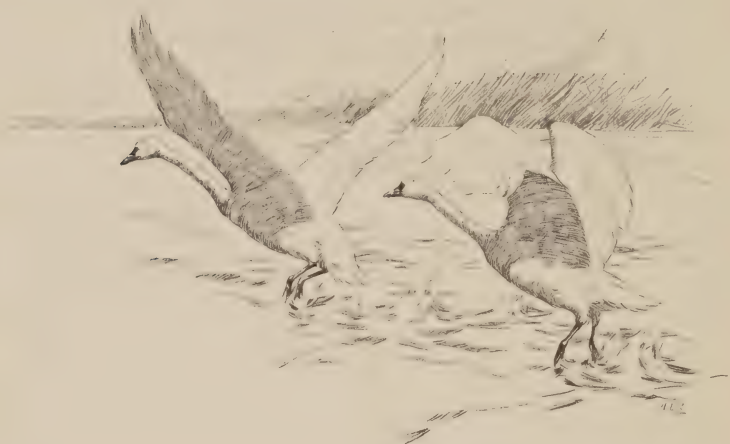
There were long days and cold days, and the sudden changes that come to that region when a norther strikes in. I remember one especially, and you, perhaps, have not forgotten it. On a fair and warm morning we were carried down south five miles by Bill B., driving old Harry in the little two-wheeled beach cart. Then Bill left us. We were only prepared for an ordinary day, with light shooting coats, not even a sweater. Around ten o'clock the norther struck, and in an hour or two the beach was just a sheet of driving sand and the glass dropping like a mad thing. Well, of course, it was just what we wanted. We lay in a little snipe meadow and to it the ducks came for shelter, just plunking right down all over it, paying no attention to us as we crouched half hidden and shot as they came up to us. We stayed until the ejector in my gun slipped by a swelled shell and there was nothing I could do to even close my gun. It was too tantalizing, sitting there with ducks alighting all around, and far too cold to stop there inactive, so I up and pushed for home against a freezing gale, a walk I shall never forget. You, old man, came later after you had shot every shell in your pockets.

Then we never will forget the half-frozen quicksands that lay in our path after a night hunt in the bend of the

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big creek. With a back-load of game we several times were nearly engulfed as we broke through the thin layer of frozen sand into three feet of sticky mud that lay below! It gave another thrill to end up one more perfect day!

And there were days when we awoke to find all Currituck a sheet of ice, with air-holes here and there, black with geese and diving fowl as far across as Church's Island. Once during a freeze that lasted several days I took my pointer dog for a walk on the ice. The Ruddy



Ducks always the first to weaken by starvation, were packed into the scattered openings and were just strong enough to struggle out and flap away low over the ice. But they were so slow and feeble that they tempted my dog, who broke away and chased them in all directions until finally he failed to check himself at the crucial moment and in spite of frantic efforts slid plump into the water. That was a bad few minutes for old 'Dash.' We scarcely hoped to get him out alive, poor dog, for the ice edge was treacherous. But get him out we finally

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did, a colder and a wiser animal by several degrees, and well broken against future excursions after ducks.

One morning a curious thing happened. The swans and geese had gone to sea as usual after sunrise on a fine day, and there they sat in fancied security till the middle of the morning when a terrific squall from the east drove many a flock into the breakers where they were so tumbled about and wetted through that, when they were finally cast ashore, they were so weak, especially the swans, that they could hardly crawl upon the sand. There they sat in 'windrows' for an hour or two gradually recovering strength and drying out their shabby, sand-filled plumage, but for a while they remained absolutely helpless and at the mercy of any person bent on their destruction. We went over to see the sight just as the birds were getting rested up and ready to leave.

All kinds of weather at any time you can have in Currituck. Remember how once in late March we made a trip for snipe? The winter, we thought, was over, most of the ducks had left, and the snipe were due at any moment. But the day after we reached the beach came a nor'-wester which in twenty-four hours froze nearly the whole Sound and *would* have frozen any self-respecting snipe, had he been fool enough to be there.

But besides the creatures that we hunted for, there were odd folks on that beach, folks we never shall forget. Market hunting was in full swing, and we saw the great loads of prime canvasback that the battery boats brought home at evening, and on Christmas day there always was a turkey shoot. You paid in ten cents for a shot at a small mark on a box put up about two gunshots off. The man who placed a pellet nearest the mark

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would carry off the turkey, and great was the excitement thereof. All the old gunners were assembled for this event in tall gum boots and battered oil hats; weather-beaten, sharp-eyed fishermen and market shooters, bent with time and crippled often with fearful rheumatism. There was much talk then of gun loads, and speculation as to some new weapon. One would put in a fearful charge of powder, another an extra dose of shot or wads, and so on. Once we entered the contest ourselves, and I won out, rather shamefacedly, with a lucky pellet from the old Scott 8-gauge. We took the turkey back to Bill, and ever after I cherished that gun as I never had before.

Odd folks there were and worse than that. For we called on, I remember, and even dined one day with Leon White; Leon, long time the terror of the whole beach, not respected, perhaps, but feared by all. How clear is the picture of that huge, square-shouldered, stooping hulk of a man leering at one from the stern of his shabby old sloop as he steered her out across the Sound. Plain as an open book, his record was written in his face, where a mean, sneering smile was made more ugly by his drooping, shaggy moustache and his generally ragged and greasy look. Leon who, for years and years, led the guards of Swan Island a merry chase, for he owned an acre or two right in the heart of that glorious duck marsh and he had no scruples about extending his pilgrimages. Rifle shots were often exchanged, and the guards of an evening would expound in boastful language what they would do with Leon should they ever catch him; but catch him they seldom did. Once, though, they rounded him up, disguised as an old woman with poke bonnet and apron, his gun hidden



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somewhere in the marsh. But Leon knew a thing or two about the law, and an alibi was ever a simple way out, especially for a man who was feared as Leon was. All his years taught him no better way to get along. He lived mostly by stealing and butchering the cattle and hogs that belonged to others, and now and then on the pocket-book of the unlucky sportsman who was green enough to fall into his clutches. Leon, the modern pirate, who lived hard and died harder, for one morning they found him in his own bed shot to pieces with two loads of a 12-gauge gun. Nobody asked too many questions, and although a proper investigation followed, the sentiment was all in favor of letting well-enough alone.

Not far away lived Teddy Lewark, the fat boy of Currituck. We paid him a visit one day and photographed his enormous bulk in the dark little attic of the cottage where he lived. He was seventeen, I think, at that time, and weighed, so we were told, over six hundred pounds; a huge cask of a person, a boy-man already grown old and with a circulation impaired, for he showed us great varicose veins that were breaking down even then. Lewark had been sent by his family to be shown in a circus, but he was a bashful, self-respecting soul, and he hated the life so thoroughly that he begged off and was finally allowed to come home and drag out the remainder of his short life. For, although Lewark was really as strong as an ox and could, as he showed us, pick up a heavy wooden skiff as you or I would handle a canoe, he was not long for this world, and died a few years later.

Currituck, the land of happy dreams, may your shores ever resound to the clamor of wild-fowl. Long of a winter evening may the wild swans, all rosy pink in

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the sunset glow, wing their appointed way, softly calling from the sky. Long may there be a harbor where he who loves thy wide horizons may lie 'alone to hear the wild goose cry.' Hold yet for a little while the march of progress, O you rushing millions, that the last of the happy hunting grounds shall not perish from this changing world.



## XII

### THE BIG RAM OF ROCKWELL MOUNTAIN





## XII

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BILL ELLSWORTH was a two-gun man, the only one I ever saw in my time in the West, but I never found it out until I saw him undress the first night in camp. For he was evidently not especially proud of his harness, and kept it covered. I met Bill in the bar-room of the West Hotel in Kalispell, when that flourishing town was only a row or two of board shanties facing a river of mud. My getting there was not premeditated, but a kind of accident consequent on the miscarriage of an intended hunt into the country north of Lake McDonald where I had cruised a little the year before. The Rockies had captured me soul and body. It was the first week in October and too early yet to go East, for had not graduation from college left me quite free to wander as I pleased? So it was a godsend, after twenty-four hours in this dreary town of Kalispell to meet a man like Ellsworth who could talk guns and sheep, tents, packs, and mountains.

But Bill, I soon found, had just been operated upon for what he called cancer, and he allowed that he was barely yet fit for active duty above timberline. So he suggested wiring to a friend of his on the other side of the mountains who would assume the duties of guide while he himself could cook.

The next day we got an answer to our wire, and after buying a few stores we boarded the east-bound Great Northern express early in the evening and by two o'clock the next morning were stowed away in Tom

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Dawson's little house on the edge of the Great Plains at Midvalle.

The morning discovered us packing up, and I found Dawson an active little man, half Indian, but educated by his father in Scotland to such purpose that he was quite able to put me to shame in matters of Scotch and English history, as well as Latin, while his wife, herself half Indian, was well educated and had taught school. This was my first introduction to the Dawsons, and for many a year after Tom and I scoured all the country that is now the southern part of the Glacier Park, shot goats and sheep on its highest places, and named mountains that were only blank spots up to that time.

The first day out it began to rain and spit snow, and in the morning the ranges were covered with a blanket of white, the first of a storm which was to last for a couple of weeks, with zero temperature and snow enough to block the railroad for four or five days. We lay by hoping it would clear up, for we had only twenty-odd miles to go to reach a hunting-camp where Tom thought we could get both sheep and goats. The wind blew half a gale, but I managed to catch all the trout we wanted by casting off some rocks near camp, although at times I could not keep my flies in the water.

After we reached a camping spot near the head of Two Medicine Valley, it started to snow in earnest, and we were lucky in digging out an old stove which Tom had cached not far away. By rigging this inside the tent we made ourselves snug enough and prepared to weather anything. Our horses, all except one that was picketed, very sensibly took the home trail; they could scarcely have lived otherwise. For more than a week our activities were limited to chopping wood, drying

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clothes, mending, reading, and telling yarns, while the blizzard whirled about us. Under like conditions one never knows how the day is passed, but the time slides by pleasantly enough. At the last the snow was waist-deep, and when the final clear-off came and two of us wallowed through the woods to the 'middle' lake, I shall never forget the sight that burst upon us as we thrust aside the last snow-laden alders and stood on the beach. The lake lay before us a vast blue-gray sheet framed in by snow-white forests and glittering mountains. Out on its surface flocks of blue-bills floated as still as painted ducks on a screen. On the west end Rockwell Mountain rose almost out of the water, and the little patches of forest far among its pinnacles looked exactly like spun glass, so completely were the spruces encased in ice. Other peaks, some unnamed, raised themselves above filmy clouds of white mist which still floated about and added to the wonder of the scene. The Rockies in winter! None that have not seen can conceive their majesty. And some day Easterners will turn their faces west in winter just as surely as Europeans go to Switzerland.

There came a chinook wind and it leveled down the snow enough so that I could get out and hunt while Tom walked home to look for his horses. All day long I followed the track of two most active bears that paused not in their walk, until at four o'clock they seemed to me to be a good deal farther ahead than they were in the morning. However, in spite of the awful going I managed to spy out two magnificent rams at the top of a long talus slope, but it was too late to follow them.

The following day I told Tom that we must have

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meat. He said, 'Well, you'll get it, but you'll work for it too'; and it turned out just as he said. Luckily I was in fairly good fighting trim after a month in Wyoming chasing big game, but had I known what was in store I should hardly have started out as gayly as I did. And now I must relate all that I know about the Great Ram of Rockwell that came so near to losing his head on this day. His great barrel horns might, except for a piece of nasty rope, be now hanging over my fireplace. Verily that day he wore a charm about his sturdy neck.

To begin, we started up my back track of the day before until we came to the place where I gave up those perambulating bears, and then, after a long look at the lower reaches of Rockwell, we started up the long shale slope, now covered with ice or buried in snowdrifts. It would have been tedious going under the best conditions, but now it was nothing less than protracted agony, for there was no spot where you could be certain that your foot would not slip, even if you were wading in snow thigh-deep. I always think that it is the first tug on those shale-slope mountains that is the worst, and that, after the weary, sweat-soaked hunter at last gets a 'hand-hold' on the naked rim-rocks, he gains a new lease of life, for then he can depend on arms as well as legs. But on this day we were little troubled with sweat.

We were almost halfway up the long slide when Tom dropped flat in the snow with a muttered grunt of disgust, and I, following at his heels, did a 'repeat,' while out of the corner of my eye I saw four great rams gallop into view from a little depression that we had not noticed before and disappear over the bare shoulder of the mountain. Tom, who had the glass, uttered



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amazed exclamations and assured me that one of them carried a remarkable head and that they all were large.

We struggled on up to the rim-rock, a little discouraged, because now there was no telling how far these wily animals would go; the chances were that they would gain country where we could not hope to follow, for the wintry conditions limited our field of activities and made rock-climbing not only very dangerous, but exceedingly slow and wearisome.

As we climbed we could see way below us the tracks of the rams where they had been feeding clear down into the edge of the timber. They must, we thought, have been on their way back to their resting ground when their keen noses detected us on our toilsome ascent. Our object now was the usual one, to get well above the sheep and hunt along the mountains until we saw either them or their tracks, for after a snowstorm a sheep is at the disadvantage of leaving a trail, which, especially on a bright day, you can sometimes see with a glass at a distance of several miles.

At first we got along fairly well in spite of every ledge being covered with ice and snow and no sure footing anywhere. We had to trust entirely to our hands and string our guns across our backs. Then it became much worse. A coating of ice covered everything and gigantic icicles barred our way; so that after wasting a lot of time we had to give it up. Going down was more ticklish than coming up, as indeed it always is, and I confessed to a feeling of real relief when we finally reached the base of the rim-rock again. There was nothing to do now but follow this around the mountain in the direction the sheep had taken. This was slow work, because this was the point where the snow had collected deepest,

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and we often had just to paddle and dig our way out of the deeper drifts by using our hands and arms as side-wheel paddles. Then we made a second assault upon the rocks and succeeded this time in getting up onto a large upper slope of shale, where we had a good view. The snow, which had been coming down by squalls all the morning, now stopped, but it came on colder and colder, the wind, blowing a whole Arctic gale, drifted great sheets of icy snow before it. Through rifts in the storm, patches of open sky broke through and we could look far out to the east over the snow-white plains, a view worth the whole trouble we had been to.

Under the windbreak of a great boulder we pulled out our lunch and ground it up as fast as ever we could, for it was much too cold to stand still more than a few minutes. Then we started uphill and soon ran across the fresh marks of two animals, whether of goats or sheep we could not tell, the snow was so soft and drifts. But we followed steadily, climbing cautiously from ledge to ledge and keeping a sharp eye about for life in this lifeless, windswept place. Then came a perpendicular pitch of eight or ten feet above which there evidently was some sort of a terrace, and Tom said, 'You go first, for they may be close by'; but right here I made a grave error by puffingly asking him to take a peep over the edge himself. This was just sheer laziness and cost me dear, as you will shortly find. I can see, now, Tom's short, snow-encrusted figure scaling those last few feet, can see his head slowly peering over the top, see it as suddenly lower and his face turn, while his black Indian eyes fairly bulged with hidden excitement. I hastily snatched at my rifle, threw a shell into it, and scrambled up beside him. He gave me a lift, whis-







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pering, 'They're right there on top.' Now, while I was wriggling up those last few difficult feet, my brain was full of goats, most unluckily for me, and, as I gradually lifted my eyes above the rim of the shelf, I looked for the tips of black horns and for nothing else. Consequently, for a fractional second I did not see the great barrel-shaped horns of an immense ram facing me, not ten feet away. Of course he saw me, too, and in the same breath of time consumed in crawling up to get my gun level with the terrace, he made a terrific back jump and vanished, while two others rose from their beds and turned to follow down after him. Without even putting my snow-covered rifle to my shoulder I shot from the hip at ten yards just as the third one gave a final leap. Then I whirled in time to see the big ram, who had not been able to make it where he took his downhill leap, bolting back by Tom so near as almost to touch the muzzle of his Winchester, and from that weapon not an explosion came; only a volley of curses from the little man himself as the harmless rifle lever clicked back and forth. Tom's position made it impossible for me to shoot till too late, and, as the great beast covered the few yards in about two bounds, it was all over before we woke up, and that mountain shelf so fully populated a second before was as bare as a bone. A moment later we were sitting on the brink pouring lead at three hopelessly distant rams as they broke into sight below us, tearing down a long, open slope, bounding and plunging in a shower of white drift, neck-deep at times, till they vanished over the next ledge.

Every hunter has had moments like this when the tension is broken, a hard-won shot taken and lost, and that awful sinking reaction grips him. Those are the

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moments when the true philosophy of sportsmanship ought to come to our aid and does, as I remember it in books, but not in real life at the age of twenty-one. No, not after a climb that had taxed me to the last ounce and had put me within ten feet of the biggest ram in all Montana, for I had seen him, yes, I can see him as plainly to-day, and I still marvel.

After we had gazed sheepishly about, Tom showed me that his rifle was rendered harmless by the sling cord (a common piece of tent rope) slipping under the lever at the stock grip so that the lever itself would not come home. And his frantic pumping of shell after shell was all in vain.

Then we took a look at the spot where I had fired my first shot, and behold there were telltale blotches of red on the fresh snow. Peering over the edge we saw him, a fine ram, but not THE ram, looking up at us, five hundred yards away. Despair was a little tempered; at least here was something to take one's mind off the bitterness of failure and give us immediate work. And sure enough our work was, the most of it, still before us. That ram was only shot through a hind leg, and he picked out the most awful part of the mountain to retreat into, bounding in and out of bottomless drifts where it was a marvel he could move. But like lean and hungry wolves we hung always upon his track, and slowly we lessened the distance; but my tale is almost done; why drag it on to a sickening anticlimax? For more than two miles we struggled along until, just as the sheep stood for a second on the skyline at two hundred yards before vanishing over another shoulder, Tom got in a lucky shot, the bullet told, the sheep spun about, head pointing downhill. Then suddenly he be-

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came limp, his head dropped to the ground, and his heels whirling up over him he turned a complete summersault and vanished over a cliff in a cloud of snow. We got down to him with great exertion and found just the tip of one horn, sticking out of the snow, a good horn, but only a poor imitation of the lost big one. It was a narrow passage between the cliff wall and a great wall of snow where the sheep had pitched, not much room to work in, but we wasted no time, I can remember that, after our struggles had pulled him out of his six-foot grave.

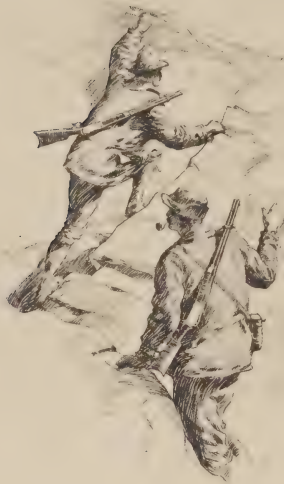
Tom took a ham and I took the head, and, as it was nearly dark and colder and blowier than ever, we were not a little anxious until we got safe into the valley bottom. Anon the moon came out, and stiff and tired as we were the vision of a warm tent and of Bill Ellsworth officiating lightened our wobbly steps.

At last the gleam of a candle in the frosty trees, the echo of a hunter's call across the night, and a moment later I was inside my warm fur bag, my wet clothes hanging aloft, and before me a plate of steaming soup.

I have often wondered what became of the Giant of Rockwell. Had he ever fallen to the hunter's rifle his fame would have been world-wide, and he could scarcely have escaped recording in Rowland Ward's book. Did he die of old age or was he carried to his last resting place on the wings of a spring avalanche? And now that all his former domain is park and sanctuary and the stall-fed tourist gazes at his summer pastures from the veranda of a great hotel, what excitement is there left for his nimble progeny? Decoyed, perhaps, to a man-made salt-lick close to a motor road, shorn of all their alertness, indifferent alike to the clang of passing ve-

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hicles or the alien chatter, do they, I wonder, serve a higher purpose than they did of old when they played with life and death on the highest peaks of the Great Divide?



THE END









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## THROUGH THE HEART OF AFGHANISTAN

*By Emil Trinkler*

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No part of Asia is more surrounded with historic and legendary interest than that bleak, rough, mountainous country that looks across the Oxus to Russia, and southward to India, and no part of the inhabited world is so little known to travelers. Dr. Emil Trinkler, a well-known geologist, went there in the employ of a trading company. He approached Afghanistan from Russian Turkestan and after some delay reached Kabul. There he was requested by the Amir to prospect for coal and iron in the foothills of the Hindu Kush mountains. He returned to Europe by way of the various cities of India.

His record of travels and impressions forms the best description of this little-known country that has been written. Of particular interest is his account of international intrigue in a land that has long been a bone of contention between Russia and England.

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DR. PHILLIPS is a distinguished ornithologist, President of the Massachusetts Fish and Game Association and the American Wild Fowlers, author of 'A Natural History of the Ducks,' and an all-round sportsman of much experience in America, Africa, and Asia. In this delightful book, he tells of sport near and far in that intimate and reminiscent vein that gives you the feeling of sitting with him before a memory-stirring campfire. The volume is handsomely illustrated with many full-page and text drawings by A. L. Ripley, who is himself a sportsman as well as an artist.

By JOHN C. PHILLIPS

